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THE SOUTH WIND

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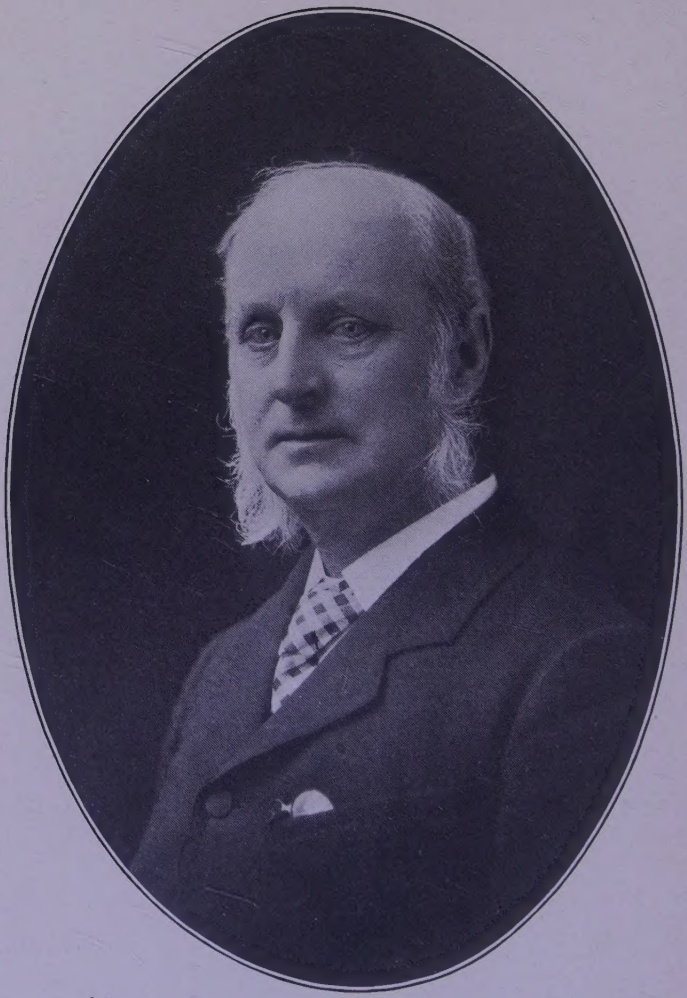

Hearty Yours

T. Harwood Pattison

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THE SOUTH WIND

AND

Other Sermons

By

T. HARWOOD PATTISON, D. D.

LATE PROFESSOR IN ROCHESTER
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Author of "The Making of the Sermon"
"Public Worship"
"The History of Christian Preaching," etc.

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INTRODUCTION

THIS volume of sermons is issued in accordance with the wish and direction of the alumni of the Rochester Theological Seminary, and the chairman of the alumni committee is asked to write an introductory word. He does so in grateful memory of a beloved teacher and friend, to whom our great brotherhood, scattered through every land, is under obligations which never can be met.

Thomas Harwood Pattison was born in Launceston, Cornwall, England, December 14, 1838. His education was received in England and Germany, and included instruction in the University College School of London, Regent's Park College of London, then under the distinguished presidency of Doctor Angus, and the private tutorage of Henry George Tomkins. For four years he was under training in an architect's office, and these years had much to do with developing in him that love of the stately and beautiful in architecture which was to mean so much to his students.

At twenty-three years of age the twenty years of pastoral service began, first at Hude Chapel, Middleton, 1862–1863; then at Rye Hill Chapel, Newcastle-on-Tyne, 1864–1870; then at West Street Chapel, Rochdale, Lancashire, 1870–1875. During these years of notable service in England his reputation was constantly increasing. Sermons and

addresses beyond the limits of his own parish made him widely known, and warm friendships were formed with such men as Dr. Alexander McLaren, Doctor Dale, and Dr. John Clifford, which endured through life. Here too, ceaseless and tireless toil developed that delightful and striking literary style which charmed and held the mind and heart of all.

But England was not to have the best of this great life. In January, 1875, Doctor Pattison came to America, and at the age of thirty-seven began a pastorate of four years in the First Baptist Church of New Haven, Conn. Under the shadow of Yale University, and with such parishioners as Dean Wayland, of the Yale Law School, it is small wonder that the ripened powers of the preacher found full play; yet he had not reached his place of greatest usefulness, though he knew it not. In 1879, the Emmanuel Church of Albany, N. Y., persuaded him to accept its pastorate, and for two years in the capital city of the Empire State he wielded an influence which was felt far and wide. The beautiful memories of this pastorate still linger in Albany.

In 1881 Doctor Pattison was invited by the trustees of the Rochester Theological Seminary to fill the professorship of Homiletics and Pastoral Theology in that institution. In September of that year he entered upon a service in the seminary which ceased only with his death, February 13, 1904. It is by the years of his service in the seminary that he will be longest remembered, for here was the crown and flower of his work.

Such are the brief outlines of a singularly full life. During Doctor Pattison's years in Rochester

his activity was not confined to his own classroom. Almost every Lord's Day found him in some pulpit. Colleges and universities almost without number counted his presence and his message an inspiration. Yale, Cornell, Brown, Williams, Rochester, Vassar, Virginia, and many more knew and loved him. During intervals in pastorates he served as stated supply for such churches as the First, Second, Lake Avenue, and Park Avenue of Rochester, and the Delaware Avenue of Buffalo. He was gladly welcomed also outside of his own communion; he frequently filled the pulpits of the Brick, St. Peter's, and the Third Presbyterian Churches in his own city, and very many beyond its borders. Unwearied in activity, unexcelled in pulpit power, unfailing in sympathetic helpfulness, what wonder that demands crowded upon him from every side? To the limit of his strength, and beyond, he met them. So abounding in life he was, so seemingly exhaustless the fountain of his service, that the shock was indescribable when it was told that his voice would be heard no more; that the Master of Life had called him home.

Doctor Pattison's students for the past twenty years will never cease to be grateful to him for the service which he rendered to them in the classroom. As a teacher he was educative, inspiring, unique. His lecture courses might follow the same lines year by year—the lectures themselves were never the same. They grew as he grew. Into them he constantly wove the choicest garnerings of his perennially acquisitive mind. Literature, history, current events, every realm he laid under contribution,

the wide reaches of the word of God most of all. To him the Bible was the center of all literature and of all history; around it he grouped his wealth of illustrative material, and he taught us to do the same. To him the center of the Bible was the radiant figure of the Christ, whose he was and whom he served.

What a teacher he was! Instruction, appeal, frank criticism, kindly advice, pathos, humor, all were there; sympathy for his students in every trial, every problem—a sympathy which in their after years followed them even to the ends of the earth; enthusiasm for the great work of the ministry and for its matchless opportunities; reverence toward the great Teacher; the power which we knew he himself had to do what he held up as the ideal for others to seek—all the qualities of a great and successful teacher he possessed.

And what a preacher he was! Texts seemed fairly to fall into their rightful divisions. His sermons were logical, but with that logic which took picturesque form, riveting attention and interest. His illustrations were jewels which glowed and sparkled. The clear-cut, classical face, the kindly eye, the persuasive voice, the appropriateness, dignity, and grace of manner, no one who has heard and seen him in the pulpit can ever forget. The sermons of this volume will lack the throbbing touch of his personal presence, but even for those who have never heard him something of the power of the great preacher is in them still.

With us who knew him best, two pictures of Doctor Pattison will ever linger most enduring and

sweetest of all. One is the hour in the seminary chapel, when he led the daily service. The classroom work for the day is over, and the students gather in the place which has come to mean so much to them. Scripture, hymn, and prayer under his leadership make a harmonious whole. His reading of the Scripture passage is an illuminative interpretation. His prayer bears the students, all their interests, their hopes, their fears, their trials, before the throne. The homes from which they come, fathers and mothers far away are remembered in the wide sweep, the inclusive tenderness of the petition. The alumni of the seminary, in city or country, in home or foreign field, in joy or sorrow, may know that they are not forgotten as the river of that prayer flows on in beauty and majesty. When it is done, in the shining glory of the afternoon sun through the chapel window, the men go quietly out, their hearts refreshed and strengthened for the work of another day.

The other is the hour of family prayer, after the evening meal in that home which was ever open in genuine welcome, in never-failing and gracious hospitality. We shall not know until the books are opened how many lives have been kept from falling, how many lives have grown into high endeavor and noble service, through the holy influence of that hour. He was the priest at his own family altar, and all in the home, though but for the hour, were of the family circle. We miss him sorely. Those who have dwelt in that home miss him most of all.

CLARENCE A. BARBOUR.

March 10, 1905.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	The South Wind	9
II.	True Reverence	21
III.	'He Went Away Sorrowful"	35
IV.	Overcoming and Inheriting	47
V.	The Character and Motive of the Christian Life	59
VI.	Counsel and Work	73
VII.	The Naturalness of Prayer	87
VIII.	For to Me to Live is Christ	101
IX.	The Man Who Never Grew Old	115
X.	The Proportions of a True Life	127
XI.	The Response of the Bible to Our Intellectual Nature	139
XII.	The Voice Behind Thee	153
XIII.	Obedience the Solvent of Doubt	167
XIV.	Pure and Undefiled Religion	181
XV.	Bread Cast Upon the Waters	195
XVI.	The Sentinel Peace	209
XVII.	The Waters of the Well of Bethlehem	221
XVIII.	The Passing and the Permanent	233
XIX.	Successful Christian Service	247
XX.	The Sympathy and Succor of Christ	259
XXI.	Some Unfinished Things	275

I

THE SOUTH WIND

When the south wind blew softly.

—*Acts 27 : 13.*

I

THE SOUTH WIND

On board the ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy there was a serious conflict of opinion. The lateness of the season, and the state of the weather, made it almost certain to the officers that they must winter in Crete. With much difficulty they had reached Fair Havens, a lonely and inconvenient harbor. A few hours' sailing, with a favorable wind, would bring them to the much more desirable shelter of Phenice. Already navigation was dangerous; and yet might they not venture forth in the hope of reaching this pleasanter and safer harbor? Julius, the Roman centurion, in charge of a band of prisoners bound for the imperial city, called a council. The captain and the ship owner advised to run all risk, and to try to attain the better anchorage. They were experts and had a right to be heard; and they spoke with the earnestness of personal interest and with the authority of ownership. Almost alone, on the other side, was Paul the prisoner. He advised that they should stay where they were. He was, it is true, only a prisoner, but already he had given

promise of that remarkable ascendency over men which was one of his distinguishing qualities. Nor was he ignorant of the sea; although his feeling toward it was no doubt that of the Hebrew who saw on its troubled waters only sorrow and unrest. But we cannot wonder that in a matter in which professional skill and the stake of personal property were concerned "the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship more than those things which were spoken by Paul."

And yet although the more part advised to depart thence, there they might have remained laid up all the winter in the incommodious harbor had not the wind, which hitherto had blown steadily from the northwest, suddenly veered about. "The south wind blew softly." A smile of satisfaction came on the faces of owner and captain, the anchor was weighed, the great mainsail was hoisted, and the crew put out to sea in the expectation of only a few hours' run to the hospitable harbor of their hopes.

Scarcely two weeks after this Paul stood on the deck of that same vessel, now driving before the fury of the tempest, and to the starving, sleepless crowd gathered about him he said, "Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss." Two weeks beneath a sunless and starless sky, in a ship from which cargo and tackling has been flung into the sea, and which even as he spoke scudded

before the pitiless storm as helpless as a leaf before the wind. And all this harm and loss because "the south wind blew softly."

1. We may learn from this brief record, taken from the log-book of a memorable voyage, that it is not always safe to listen to the voice of apparent superior authority. Without any question that superior authority belonged to the experts. The captain had come by his position in consequence of his skill in seamanship. He was a professional navigator; Paul was not. The one followed the sea as his vocation; the other never willingly put to sea at all. But it is probable that Paul, to an extent far greater than the captain, had what in an emergency counts for more than the skill of the schools. He had experience. He could say, "Thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have floated in the deep." This is, after all, the highest science. How often has it been seen that in all departments of life the mere schoolman has had to stand aside, that the man who knew from personal experience might be heard. The priest is less than the prophet. The unlearned and ignorant apostles baffle the scribes and Pharisees. The crowned king of England falls before the rough-hewn Oliver Cromwell. The unbattled host of Massachusetts farmers holds Great Britain at bay; and in our own time the naval experts of Europe stood amazed before the splendid genius of Santiago.

Such experience in the case before us, would naturally counsel caution. The harbor of Fair Havens was indeed incommodious; and yet here we are, and is it not better to bear the ills we have than flee to others that we know not of? The south wind does indeed blow softly; but there are other winds in store for us, which are neither soothing nor soft. Not long has the ship loosed from Fair Havens before "there arose against it a tempestuous wind called Euroclydon." The child of the south wind may be the storm.

Such experience teaches patience. The main thought with the captain was to reach his destination, where the owner was to deliver his freight to the merchants, where the centurion was to hand his prisoners over to the authorities in Rome. And yet Paul's counsels of patience may win these desired ends quicker than the breath of the soft but fickle south wind. Pitt, the British prime minister, listened on one occasion to a discussion as to the qualifications required for the post which he occupied. One man said "Courage," another said "Experience," a third said "Eloquence." "No," said Pitt, owner himself of all these things; "the one quality for a prime minister is patience." And he was right. This is the teaching of Jesus, when he says to his disciples, "By your endurance ye shall win your lives." Now the voice of the apostle in this incident was the voice of the highest

science, for it was the voice of one who by personal experience had learned to read the secret of the sea.

2. We may further learn that it is not always wise to surrender our own convictions to the decision of the majority. "The more part advised to depart thence." The "more part" is likely to do this. The majority is often in favor of change. And certainly they will be influenced by the centurion who represents authority, and by the owner who represents substance, by the captain who represents skill. Is this not well? Yes it is, but with this saving clause, that not interest, not authority, not skill, not one or even all of these, shall usurp the place of personal conviction. The vice of the majority in all time has been a reluctance to think for itself. It is men like Paul who dare to say, "Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage." He may in this forecast be right or he may be wrong; but anyhow he has come to this conclusion as the result of original study. We are so much tempted to believe that "the voice of the people is the voice of God" and that there is something divine in the decision of the majority, that it is wholesome for us to remember that history is full of the triumphs of the minority. "Athanasius against the world," as the fierce theologian exclaimed; and Athanasius conquered. "We are but two," whispered

Mohammed's solitary companion as they hid in the cavern and waited with bated breath the arrival of their foes. "No," answered the prophet, "we are three; for God is on our side." "Here I stand," said Luther in the hour of his trial, "I can do naught else; God help me." It is only a calm historical assertion that Calvary is the perpetual monument to the potency of the minority. At that hour, under the blackened heaven above a blaspheming earth, Jesus was alone.

Our point is not complete unless we add that, be he right in his conclusions or be he wrong in them, the man who thinks for himself as he looks out over the sea of life and prepares to make his voyage, is acting well his part. He may fail as the world counts failure, but he shall even in that case discover how much high failure transcends the bounds of low success. "If he be the King of Israel," shouted the chief priests and scribes as they jeered around the cross of Christ, "let him come down from the cross, and we will believe." But to come down, in that instance, would have been to surrender the distinctive glory of his mission. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." "I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me." I ought also to notice that while Paul gave his opinion and uttered his protest, he made no further trouble. He held his peace and waited. A man does not

surrender his convictions because he is not always clamorous about them. The end is not yet ; and he can bide his time.

3. We learn, once more, from this incident that it is not always well to yield ourselves to the south wind blowing softly. On the contrary, there are many times when it is far better to remain in Fair Havens.

Let it be granted that "the harbor was not commodious to winter in." It was not, we understand, dangerous. The long and perilous months before them the crew could pass there in comparative safety. But it was obscure and lonely to become the home of nearly three hundred people. Those who make convenience the first rule of life have no good words to speak for Fair Havens. True, it is a place in which life and lading are secure. But it is not beautiful, it is not attractive, it is not even in the currents of life. Its nearest neighbor is an obscure town called Lasæa. It has always been the fashion to pity the occupants of this incommodious harbor. The narrow means, the hard struggle to live, the humble home, the unbeautiful daily course ! Much compassion has been wasted over all these—wasted, I say, because there is worse weariness than they represent, and there is far greater peril elsewhere to the true life. In his last conversations Mr. Gladstone more than once turned his thoughts to this country, and the danger

ahead which he saw was not our poverty but rather our wealth. We are certainly ungrateful to the incommodious harbor if we overlook or forget how much humanity owes to it. How its very inconvenience has quickened our faculties, so that the children of Plymouth Rock and of the bleak New England coast have become the foremost inventors in the world. The very opposition which that unbeautiful harbor typifies has made us what we are. God educates us amidst harsh and ungenial circumstances. The leading nations to-day are not those that set sail from ports of pleasure under blue skies and amid the lapping waves of southern skies.

Granted also that at the very moment which seemed so opportune the south wind blew softly. It proved in the end their worst enemy. True, it quickened their imagination. This is what the south wind naturally does, and it does little more.

You might think that under its spell the world's greatest poetry has been sung. But the poet, like the nightingale, has often sung sweetest when his breast has been pressed against the thorn. Exile and the chill breath of cold ingratitude gave to Dante his message ; and the gray skies of England, strangers to much golden sunshine, arched over Shakespeare as he sang.

True also, it pleased the taste. It came from the tropics, with velvet, balmy sweetness. It was the wind of luxury. The south wind blowing

softly has it annals as well as the bracing northwester of which these mariners were so weary. It has blown in the life of the nation, and under its spell Rome has lost its sinew, and Spain to-day sees herself stripped of her jewels. Again and again it has taken out the very heart of a brave people. It has blown in the history of our homes. The wreckage of perilous wealth is more tragic than the wreckage of pinching poverty. It has found its way and its welcome in many a young life of fair, bright promise, and under its siren sway the manhood, the womanhood has succumbed to mere self-indulgence. There are graves known to us all, I fear, on which this one sentence might be written, and it would tell all the story of a wasted life—"The south wind blew softly."

It has blown in the annals of the Christian church, and the church has failed to do its appointed work. Not poverty but riches is it against which Jesus speaks his words of warning, and that because not poverty but riches threatens most seriously our fidelity to the kingdom of heaven. The pope of that time pointed to the treasures being blown into his palace of the Vatican, and he said to St. Thomas Aquinas, "You see the day is past when the church can say, 'Silver and gold have I none.'" "Yes, holy father," was the reply, "and the day is also past when to the paralytic she can say, 'Take up thy bed and walk.'"

This word of warning is warranted by the fact that the course of the captain and owner in loosing from the incommodious haven seemed so reasonable. There is always much to be said in favor of the south wind when it blows softly. "My God," a blind preacher of our own time, a man of rare genius and spirit, says in one of his prayers, "My God, I have never thanked thee for my thorn, I have thanked thee a thousand times for my roses, but not once for my thorn. Thou divine love, whose human path has been perfected through suffering, teach me the glory of my cross, teach me the value of my thorn." We cannot be wrong if we learn to make that prayer our own whichever wind fills our sails to-day.

II

TRUE REVERENCE

And he said, Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

—*Exodus 3 : 5.*

II

TRUE REVERENCE

THE chapter from which these words are taken is full of remarkable contrasts with that which precedes it. In both indeed the central figure is the same. But with this one particular all resemblance between the two seems to cease. Moses the prince in the first is Moses the peasant in the second of the chapters. The son of Pharaoh's daughter becomes the son-in-law of an Arab shepherd chieftain. The schools of Egypt are exchanged for the solitudes of the desert; the palace vanishes, and in its stead we behold the granite peaks of Sinai.

When his banishment from the populous city, the highly civilized peoples, the luxury and the splendor of the Egyptian court had continued for forty years, it would be natural to conclude that Moses is finally and forever laid on one side. He has played his little part on the stage of life and may now be forgotten. The meteor which burned so brightly has vanished, as many another before and since, into the gloom. This, however, was very far from being the case. The school of God has often trained its aptest scholars in the

wilderness. Instead of being buried in an unknown desert grave, Moses is about to rise to a newness of life. The hour has come for him to emerge from the gloom, and once more—and now more illustriously than ever before—to act his great part on that theatre of the world in which heaven and earth, the present and the future, are the interested spectators. Whatever he himself may have believed, he was not retreating when for nearly a century he wandered in the desert; any more than the wave retreats when by its refluent sweep it gathers force and fullness with which once again to thunder on the shore.

From this first vision of God the man who was destined to be the leader and lawgiver of Israel learned very much; but I will ask your attention now to one only of these initial truths here revealed to him. I mean the nature and claims of reverence; and I choose it for the subject of our thought because it is of perpetual interest and moment. We as much as Moses need to learn what true reverence is. Notice then:

1. That this feeling of reverence was wakened in Moses by the warning which he now received. The warning may be said to have been two-fold. He was cautioned against the spirit which he was cherishing, and against the state into which he was sinking.

Think of the spirit which Moses was cherishing. Of the forty years which he has now spent as a

shepherd we have no record. It is natural for us to picture him as a learner, a conscious learner, in the great school of solitude and silence where he wandered. No wonder that with our conception, drawn from the restless and eager age in which we live, we should say that doubtless Moses was here to solve the problems which had oppressed him as a boy and a young man in Egypt; that here as never before

> He saw through life and death, through good and ill;
> He saw through his own soul.

As a matter of fact, however, we are told nothing about this third part of his life which Moses passed in these mountainous ranges; and when we listen to his words in this chapter, they suggest that the scholar had almost everything yet to learn. Apparently his religious hopes, and the very faith from which they sprang, had well-nigh died out. He was falling into a condition not so much raised above the flock which he tended. "Look out for a people," says Hume, "entirely destitute of religion. If you find them at all, be assured that they are but a few degrees removed from brutes." Moses was indeed far from this forlorn condition as yet, but he seems almost to have been on his way to it. From it he is rescued at once by a marvelous natural phenomenon. "A flame of fire in the midst of a bush, and behold, the bush burned," etc.

An unwonted feeling, one which for years had been a stranger to his breast, was roused; the feeling of curiosity: "And Moses said," etc. But curiosity in its turn was also perilous. It is only worthy of commendation when it becomes a gateway through which one passes to reverence; and so the feeling was checked at the moment when it rose to action, by the voice of God calling to him out of the midst of the bush, "Draw not nigh hither!"

Think, again, of the state into which Moses was in danger of sinking. This is suggested by the words which follow. "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place . . . is holy ground. A state of quiet hopelessness as to his future led him to a state of quiet indifference as to his personal unworthiness. What was the use served by the sandals? You answer: They guard the bare feet which are thrust into them from dust and defilement. What would otherwise cling to the foot, now clings to the sandal. "With the shoes, there is left behind that dust or impurity of earth which is collected in walking on earth's ways." Here, then, two truths, so closely related that they can never be considered apart, were impressed on Moses' mind. I mean the sense of his own personal sinfulness, and the conviction of God's absolute holiness. No need to be shod in that presence, "for the place whereon," etc. Walk free and fearless there! There can gather no stain of sin upon the street of the New

Jerusalem, and therefore it is "pure gold as it were transparent glass."

2. So on the very threshold of this temple of worship and communion "reared in the mountain of God," Moses learned that reverence claimed that he be holy because God was holy. The first element in reverence is personal sanctification, personal holiness.

That reverence was inspired by the discovery of God's presence. "And the angel of the Lord." None other, as we are told afterward, than Jehovah himself, "appeared unto him," etc. We remember that Moses had been born and trained in Egypt. His associations in regard to religion would almost inevitably be closely connected with great temples, the stateliest and the most splendid structures in that stretch of splendid land. His father-in-law is indeed called "the priest of Midian," and possibly he was a believer as Melchisedec was, but we read nothing of shrine or sanctuary or altar in his house. Under these circumstances it was natural that if Moses thought about the subject at all, he should picture the Most High as dwelling only in temples made with hands. From such a narrow conception he is now to be forever emancipated. The poor stunted bush, the thorny acacia, "so characteristic of that barren region that the name Mount Sinai is supposed to be derived from it," became luminous with the glory of God. We need to learn the

lesson which Moses was now taught, and therefore we may well pause over it.

He discovered that God reveals himself in the familiar. How well Moses had come to know this desert! To him it was not historic or heroic, as it is to us. It was only the pasturage for his flock. Notice that to all appearances Moses was satisfied. "And Moses was content to dwell with the man," etc. Why not? Had he not all he needed for the present? The home and the business, both prosperous enough, were his. And further I note that this satisfaction was of the most fatal kind, as it was satisfaction born of tranquil despair. He had no future; he had no past. Egypt was not more of a faded dream to him than was Canaan an unsubstantial vision. "Who am I?" he cried to God a few moments hence. He has lost reverence for himself, the child of such high hopes and glowing auguries. Ah, yes, for not until we reverence God do we reverence ourselves. Now he discovers, in this sudden burst of divine light, what Jacob had discovered long before—what we must discover also if we are to discover ourselves—"Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not." Here is the immanence of God. But he learned further, although in the same line of discovery, that God's presence may be looked for in the commonplace. The bush—commonest object in that desert—it was that burned with fire. A

"great sight" indeed! I do not find it so hard to believe in a God of glory thundering as I do in a God walking amid the trees of the garden in the cool of the evening. That the peaks of Sinai, far-off, remote, piercing the heavens, should flame with the splendor of his advent fire is not so wonderful as that he should touch the poor acacia shrub with his fiery finger. The supernatural in the natural perplexes us. Not "God," but "God manifest in the flesh." We are all conscious of this difficulty. But what does it mean? Only that sin has robbed the familiar forms and objects round about us of their true and native dignity. It materializes the universe. God is perpetually rescuing this earth of ours (and of his) from the contempt into which it has fallen. He teaches Moses that even a shepherd's rod can be the mightiest of sceptres, and David that even a shepherd's harp can be the most melodious of instruments. That rod and that harp are now part and parcel of an immortal past. History cannot spare the one, devotion with loving reverence cherishes the other.

Now the conclusion from this is most important. Our holy land is here; not in Jerusalem or on yonder mountain is God, but rather seated on the lowly well-side. "I that speak unto thee am he." Our daily life becomes solemn and yet unspeakably beautiful when we grasp the truth. Fellowship with God can be enjoyed in the humblest home.

The shop may become a sanctuary. All life is transformed and transfigured into a sacrament.

> Where'er we seek thee thou art found,
> And every place is hallowed ground.

3. This feeling of reverence was deepened and confirmed in Moses by the revelation of God's nature.

Two senses were appealed to in this experience through which Moses passed, his sight and his hearing.

First, what was it Moses said? "He looked, and behold," etc. We are no doubt familiar with many of the explanations of this phenomenon which have been suggested. Fire has by all nations been considered a natural symbol of deity; and that, in part because it has also been considered a natural symbol of life. Now this was just what Moses most sorely needed to learn. He must come to believe most firmly in a living God, present and powerful in this wilderness. No past or future deity; but essentially and intensely present. "And God said unto Moses, Then shalt thou say," etc. So it has been said most truly that what the Old Testament insists upon above all else is the association of the object of our worship with the idea of life. God shall be a living God. "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God." Is this not the only thing for which we still need to be supremely anxious, the presence

of the living God? Reverence for the church building, for the Christian fellowship of men and women, for the individual believer, is most worthless—it is actually dangerous and verges on superstition, unless the bush burns with the presence of the living God. That made the holy of holies resplendent, that transformed the shore of Galilee into a temple, that consecrated the upper chamber in Jerusalem as the mightiest of sanctuaries. Is this building holy? Yes, if the living God be here. Otherwise its colored windows richly lighted, its carven timbers, and its goodly stones, are only like the jeweled robes which wrap the form of the dead monarch. The holy places of earth are many of them as humble and unpromising as was this bush on Horeb; but nothing is holy where God is not, and where God is there is nothing too lowly to enshrine his glory.

Then think what Moses heard. Oh, he heard so much in those great utterances of God that we can but glance at some few of the powerful impressions made on his nature! Did not he learn God's mindfulness? "Moses, Moses!" His name, then, was not forgotten. Here at his very feet the voice speaks, and it speaks to him. Brethren, so well does God understand us that he calls us by our own names. We need not wonder at it, we ought not to do so, but yet we do. And then suddenly some familiar experience becomes vocal and personal with

our very name, and we discover that not the care of all the world can blot us out of the mindfulness of our Father in heaven :

> Thou art as much his care as if beside
> Nor men nor angels lived, in heaven or earth.

Did not he further learn God's transcendent glory? "I am come down." God was in the bush but only because he had chosen it as the medium through which to reach the shepherd of Horeb. He was not the bush. Always and everywhere it must be a descent when God comes into range and residence with us.

Yes, and the priceless truth of the Divine permanence he learned also. "I am the God of thy father, the God," etc. He spoke of the patriarchs as not many but only one—"thy father." It is not only that God abides ever the same ; but it is that therefore we, the human family, abide. The individual, indeed, passes away, but the race continues, as the wave rises and sinks but the ocean is always there. I worshiped in Abraham, I pleaded in Jacob, I sang with David. I cried for help in Peter, I yielded in Paul, I waited patiently in the splendor of heavenly vision in Patmos with John. God's purpose for the race holds the race together as the heart of one man.

Then over all falls the conviction of God's love. "I have surely seen." One catches here, as in so

many other places in the Old Testament, the prelude of that saving mercy which became incarnate in Christ. "I know their sorrows; I am come down to deliver them." The advent was anticipated in such words as these. It was under the impressive majesty of that first revelation which bade him keep off from the place, that we are told "Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God." Curiosity had now given place to dread. But genuine reverence has nothing in common with either of these. So the further revelation, which is so full of the divine mindfulness and the divine mercy, if it took the sandals from his feet also took the mantle from his shrouded lips. He spoke to God, as a man speaketh to his friend, face to face.

Brethren, we are far removed from this desert. A moment more, and we shall return to the world, as the great leader returned once again after his forty years' exile to the pomp and splendor of Egypt. But let us leave these granite heights, which have not ceased since then to glow with the dawn and to stand calm and gray under the starlight, with this conviction which changed the slumberous shepherd into the heroic man among men. God with us; God in us; God for us. Of this whole world and of each consecrated life in it is it forever true. "The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him."

III

"HE WENT AWAY SORROWFUL"

But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful ; for he had great possessions.

—*Matthew 19 : 22.*

III

"HE WENT AWAY SORROWFUL"

One word, which rises midway in this verse, gives not to our text alone but also to the whole story a special fascination. This word is "sorrowful." Omit it, and while the incident would still attract our attention because of the peremptory demand which Jesus made that this young man should surrender all his substance in order to become a disciple, yet the intense human interest which clothes it now would be lacking. One of the old Italian painters represents Solomon as rising at the last day, and looking right and left on the parting multitudes before the judgment throne, as though uncertain with which of the two divisions his lot would be forever cast, and it is just this same doubt which is inspired in our minds by that word "sorrowful." Supposing that we had seen what was happening without hearing what was said, this look on the young man's face would suffice to tell us that he had reached one of those critical moments which in every human life mean so much. Plainly a change has passed over his thought, his purposes, his hopes. The evangelist Mark makes

this contrast very vivid when he says, "he came running," and a moment or two after, "he went away grieved." The simple fact that in three of the Gospels the story of this rich young man is told at length, plainly shows how much it impressed the disciples, and to this hour that sorrowful look of his continues to haunt the imagination of the world. It seems to be material, therefore, that in what has to be said we should confine our thoughts to the grief which clouded the young man's countenance when he fell back into the throng and vanished from recorded history. Three things we may notice about it. It was the sorrow of disappointment; it was the sorrow of discovery; it was the sorrow of disquietude.

1. It was the sorrow of disappointment. Enough is told us about his life up to that hour for us to recover many of its details. Darwin met for the first time one of his most ardent followers, with whom he had already corresponded at length, with outstretched hands, a bright smile, and these words of welcome: "How glad I am that you are so young." The subject of this story has this unspeakable advantage. He had not waited long to find his vocation, now ripened only under late autumnal skies. He was a young man with a career already well defined. What benefits accrue from ancestry and birth he could claim for himself; he had enjoyed all that the schools of that day could

do for him, and he had inherited great possessions, with the chances for influencing men which wealth brings with it. Already in the government of his native place, where Church and State were one, he occupied with honor the post of magistrate. All these were conspicuous features in his case, but there is much more and much better to be told yet. He could say, and in no boastful spirit, of the second table in the Decalogue, of the commandments which touch our duty to our fellowmen, and are therefore open to the test of practical daily scrutiny, "All these have I observed from my youth." There is no evidence that he was either self-righteous or self-deceived. He did not tremble beneath the thunders and the lightnings of Sinai. In an age when religion meant to a greater extent than it does with us, a rigid observance of statutes rather than a living embodiment of principles, this young man could declare with Saul the Pharisee, "As touching the righteousness of the law, blameless."

And yet, and yet, he was filled with a noble discontent. So when the news spread that Jesus of Nazareth was to pass that way before long, he launched out on a new venture of faith. Already he possessed a religion, but what he was in search of was a religion that would possess him. The tables of the law he had kept indeed, but to his warm touch they felt cold and unresponsive. He

was asking for bread, and all they offered him was a stone. It was life, eternal life he yearned for, and all too plainly that way eternal life did not lie. So in an access of rare and beautiful enthusiasm he came running, and as the crowd separated to let him pass straight to the place where Jesus paused, he fell on his knees before him with the cry, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" The answer of our Lord touched at once the high point of his aspirations. "If thou wilt be perfect"—but then as the further words fell on his ears, in the clear resonant tones into which no parleying or compromise could be read, his heart and his countenance fell. "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell that thou hast." Only a moment did it take Jesus to utter his answer, but it was a moment which lost all count of time, and it dashed the young aspirant's hopes baffled and beaten to the ground. "He went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions."

2. It was the sorrow of discovery. Perhaps there were few men of his time and land who could claim what he could as regards the moral law, and among them the danger would be that having attained so much they would rest content. Yet to the best of men must there not come, then as now, moments of dissatisfaction? "The law having a shadow of the good things to come can never make perfect." A shadow is but a shadow, and they

who see it in the brightest light see most clearly the outline of that by which it is cast. These commandments which the young man had kept from his youth up had each of them, as Jesus showed in his teaching, its spiritual side—its broader outlook. A man might observe them in the letter and yet wholly break them. And sometimes it is with the keeper of the law, as it is with one who climbs a stairway in some old castle in the dark, feeling the firm stones beneath his feet, but conscious of mysterious spaces lying to the right and left. What that young ruler claimed—and he did it honestly—was that he had treated the world about him fairly and well. He had great possessions ~~it was true,~~ not money gained in trade, or still less by usury, but that which was the supreme blessing of the Old Testament, land. And at that hour when the best thought of the Jewish race looked for approaching victory over Rome, and the recovery before long of the country which Jehovah had given to their fathers, it was of consequence as never before to hold as a true patriot "great possessions." Unconsciously to himself "this earth hunger" had mastered him. Not that he was a miser, for if the miser is of all men the hardest to reach with generous impulses, the young miser is a phenomenon as abnormal as happily it is rare. No; but still for all it meant of affluent influence he loved his wealth.

The claim which Jesus made was intended to lift his glance from the things which were seen and temporal in religion to the things which were unseen and eternal. It put a new and nobler meaning into the keeping of the law in which he prided himself, and of that new and nobler meaning he had now to acknowlege to himself that hitherto he had known very little.

And more than this. The test which Jesus applied discovered to the young man, that after all there was something which he loved better than he loved eternal life. He would rather give up life for his wealth than give up his wealth for life. The thing, I care not what it may be, about which this is true in any life is the thing which must peremptorily be surrendered. Had not this earnest-hearted inquirer come to ask for life? Here was the way to it. Break yourself of the one bond which is holding you back. That it means so much to you affects the matter not at all. What shall a man give in exchange for his life? "Sell that thou hast, give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." Cry, with no whisper of reservation:

Come ill or well, the cross, the crown, the rainbow or the thunder,
I fling my soul and body down for God to plow them under.

Alas, "he went away."

3. Yet as he goes we feel as though we must not part with him there. I find a gleam of hope in our text. His was (let this be our final thought) the sorrow of disquietude. He was not angry or resentful or scornful, he was grieved. As we follow him with our surmises what do we see? How will that sorrow work? I answer, It will work in one of two ways.

(1) Perhaps—this is the first way—he will resolutely refuse Jesus. Deep in his heart that sorrow will lie and the dust will gather over it; it will be buried under deeds and bonds and mortgages. He will still keep the law and hold his place of honor on the magistrate's bench. Some day, it may be, in turning over the records of his former transactions he may chance to catch a glimpse of that old buried sorrow, and it will strike through him with a sudden chill. He had in these intervening years gained much, but he had lost that, and no breath of eternal life had been wafted to him since. Had he any comfort now in his "great possessions"?

Comfort! comfort scorned of devils, this is truth the poet sings,
That a sorrow's crown of sorrows is remembering happier things.

(2) But let us dare to hope that his grieving worked otherwise. "He went away," indeed, but by and by as the years rolled on he took notice of those

who had done as he. With whom was he keeping company? Judas went away and sold his Lord for thirty pieces of silver; and so did Herod when he set Jesus at naught; and so did Pilate as he asked "What is truth?" and dared not wait for an answer; and so did Felix, when to Paul and to his own conscience he said, "Go thy way for this time"; and so did Demas when, as the apostle says, "he forsook us, having loved this present world." And all the while he would be meeting, bound the other way, with eternal life flashing its foregleams on their faces, "the men of whom the world was not worthy." Would not better counsels prevail, and although late, would he not make the great surrender, who earlier in a tragic hour had made the great refusal? We cannot tell, but we can hope. The love of Jesus would not then have been lavished in vain, and as the words came up to heaven, "I will arise and go to my Father, and say, Father I have sinned," the Saviour would, although it might be at the eleventh hour, see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. Carlyle speaks somewhere of that gift of life "which a man can have but once, for he waited a whole eternity to be born, and now has a whole eternity waiting to see what he will do when born." For all we know to the contrary this supreme moment came once only to this young ruler, and he could not say with Paul, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." The recent "Life of

Tennyson" has revealed to us the case of a young man who, convinced that within him stirred the gift of song which God had bidden him use, went on his resolute way, with poverty, hardship, hope deferred, and a hundred forms of self-denial, bravely true to himself and to his call. And in the end he had his reward. In one or another form this necessity to decide for or against the heavenly vision comes to us all. And the tragic truth is that we must make our choice for ourselves. Jesus may love the young man, but not even that can take the place of the young man's loving him. About this let there be no mistake. The religion of Jesus does demand self-surrender and self-sacrifice. Neither here nor elsewhere is it otherwise set forth.

IV

OVERCOMING AND INHERITING

He that overcometh shall inherit all things.

—*Revelation 21 : 7.*

IV

OVERCOMING AND INHERITING

It was with blood drawn from his own right arm that the old Scottish Covenanter signed the confession of his faith. To-day, in some carefully preserved documents, such names can yet be traced, but now the writing is faded and pale. Very faintly does it perpetuate the living autograph of which it is only the ghost and shadow. So is it with our text. What if we could have seen John write these words! It was said of Whitefield, the famous preacher, that to hear him pronounce certain favorite words was better than any sermon. Was there an eloquence of emphasis in John's tones as he repeated our text and lingered over the precious truth it carried to his heart? "He that overcometh."

I propose that we think of it in this personal light. The means may justify such a course. First, the circumstances of the apostle when he wrote them. A prisoner; "in the isle that is called Patmos for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ," he was a prisoner of hope. In his thought the certainty of deliverance and of triumph was always prominent. This word

"overcometh," which is almost exclusively his, he may have learned from his Master, for it is John who received the declaration of Jesus, "I have overcome the world." However that may have been, it is certain that it was a favorite word with John. He uses it at least six times in his letters and twelve times in this book. This suggests that above the darkness of the exile on Patmos gleamed the assurance of approaching victory.

Then, again, I think that there was personal emphasis in the word "overcometh" as John spoke it, because of his own character. He had something to conquer before he could hope to inherit. Now what was that? Without going any further than the fact that our text was written by John, the companion of Jesus, the disciple whom he loved, the one who lingered latest upon the battlefield, let us simply think of these words as a bit of his personal history. He bathed them in his own experience. The light which poured from them reached him by way of the familiar window of his own life, and it was all colored and changed by that. What was it, let us ask, that John had to overcome? What was it that John hoped to inherit?

1. He overcame his natural love for his vocation. He was a Galilean fisherman, as was his brother James. So also was his father before him, and probably for generations this had been the occupation of the family. There are evidences

that they had hired servants, and the mother of the family had certainly substance with which she in after years ministered to Jesus. This John left at the bidding of Christ. Twice that call was repeated before it was finally obeyed, and perhaps this points to a struggle and a conflict. Does it seem to you to be a slight matter this? I have seen the Irish emigrant lean forward over the bulwarks of the vessel as the land of his birth faded from his eyes forever, and tears were streaming from his eyes that told a very different tale. He was leaving poverty, rags, and wretchedness. The heir of centuries of wrong, the light died out upon a ruined hovel and barn and barren hillside—but it was home! Here, in this country, was competency, comfort, a sure livelihood, and an inheritance to pass on to the next generation. Christ came to John, as it might be to you, the clerk, the mechanic, the man of business, and he said, "Follow me." And he immediately left the ship and his father and followed Jesus. There was something overcome in that.

2. He overcame his preconceived ideal of what the national deliverer should be. It was the preaching of John the Baptist that first attracted the young fisherman of Bethsaida. In common with a throng from all parts of the country, he found himself in the wilderness of Judea, listening to the fearless witness for God and the truth who

was there, as he said, to prepare the way of the Lord. Into the inner circle of John's chosen disciples he was drawn. But John the Baptist was only "a voice." He was like the courier who, in the Eastern lands, runs before the sovereign to clear his path, to proclaim his title. Gaunt and sinewy, his very figure as well as his dress suggested this. Far other would it be with the Messiah himself when he should come! The hot and dusty herald, lightly clad, fleet of foot, and rough in outward appearance, was not less like the great sovereign whose forerunner he was than was John unlike his King. So men thought.

One day, however, John the Baptist was standing by the Jordan with our fisherman, now his ardent disciple, and pointing to a young man, one just like themselves, said, "Behold the Lamb of God." It needed that this startling sentence should be repeated once more, the next day, before John could grasp the truth. "Verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." God has no nobler casket into which to put the jewel of redemption than our flesh, the body which he himself has fearfully and wonderfully made. But to believe this was, to such an one as John, not easy. He had listened to the reading of the prophets, he had drunk in the splendor of the national faith in a coming Messiah, he had caught, now and again, an ecstatic glimpse of what the Son

of God, the King of Israel, should be. Now he is bidden believe that his own countryman, a man in all respects such as he is, is the Hope of the world. He does believe it, but it means again a struggle before he finally overcomes.

3. He overcame his passionate nature. You may know that modesty was one characteristic of John. He never mentions his own name. He calls himself "that other disciple," or "the disciple whom Jesus loved." As a consequence of this reticence we have a popular conception of John which I believe to be totally wrong. He is pictured as womanly, with smooth face, as tender and soft and yielding. All this, in the main, because he speaks so little of himself and because he was specially loved by Jesus. But how mistaken this is! The man who is always talking of himself, in the prayer meeting, in the pulpit, in the home, is weak, he is not strong. Men talk of themselves in the inverse ratio of their worth. The Pharisee has told us far more of his personal history than John has. And if Jesus loved John it was not because he was soft and yielding, but because he was deep and quick and broad. It was this man that Jesus named a son of thunder; it was this man who forbade the man to cast out devils in his Master's name "because he followeth not with us"; it was this man who wished to call down fire from heaven to consume a village of the Samaritans because the

people there would not welcome his Master. This, however, is the last recorded outburst of unbridled passion. It was the final upleaping of a flame which, henceforth consecrated to Christ, made the disciple's whole nature to glow with a sacred fervor and a pure passion. But let any one who is quick and impetuous say whether it is an easy thing to conquer and control self. This John did, and it meant overcoming.

4. He overcame his personal ambition. One day he and James, with their mother, came to Jesus, worshiping him, and desiring that in the coming kingdom of God these two sons might be seated the one on the right hand and the other on the left hand of the Lord. It was a daring request and it spoke a daring nature. Not for nothing had John wandered on that Galilean beach "nourishing a youth sublime"! Not for nothing had he climbed with Jesus the mount of Transfiguration and heard Moses and Elijah talk with his Master of his approaching death and of the glory that should follow. Because he speaks so little of self do not be deceived. It is the still river that runs deep. With nothing short of a throne beside his Lord in his coming reign will John be content. Now he has come to be an old man. One by one his friends have crossed the river and he lingers yet on the shore. The gates opened first for his own brother James; Peter, his closest companion,

has gone in too. On this barren strand he stands alone, a relic of a past age, but he is content. No longer snatching at the highest place, I hear him whisper, "It doth not yet appear."

He overcame his natural love for the home in Bethsaida and for the fishing boat on Galilee; he overcame his own splendid vision of the Messiah; he overcame his impulsive and passionate disposition; he overcame his early ambition.

This overcoming was not all. Upon that foundation let me build up the noble truth of the text, he "shall inherit all things." Without pausing to explain at greater length the full meaning of this inheritance, which really points to the new heaven and the new earth, we will still keep to the personal bearing of all this upon John. The truth I believe to be this. What man conquers he inherits. If he conquers self he inherits self. If he conquers circumstances he inherits circumstances. Now, think how true this was in John's personal experience. He overcame and so he inherited.

He overcame his natural love for his vocation. But what then? "Come after me," said Jesus, "and I will make you to be a fisher of men." The same thing, my brother, Abraham left his country, but he found Canaan; he left his kindred, but he found a posterity numberless as the stars of heaven; he left his father's house, but in him all the families of the earth were blessed. What you give up

comes back to you, with a divine difference. Not to cast the net into the waters of Galilee, but into the great ocean of life; not a fisher of fishes, but a fisher of men.

He overcame his ideal of an earthly Messiah. He inherited the most glorious conception of the Son of God and the Son of Man that human heart has welcomed to its love. It was upon him that the Christ of this book, clothed royally and girt with gold, with flaming feet and a voice as the sound of many waters, laid his right hand. The poor, baseless vision of his boyhood, how worthless it must have seemed compared with this divine reality so full of the majesty of heaven and the music of its royal voice!

He overcame his nature in its passionate importunity. Robed as a conqueror he inherited that nature. The soil once rent of the volcano is often the richest in which to grow the olive and the vine. This passionate heart lost none of its fire; it could still flame up when the Son of God was insulted, but oh, how it rather glowed with unquenchable love for him! If now and again it flashed its flame on the rebellious and the defiant, its true and cherished mission was just to light men and women to the feet of Christ. The crimson on his banner was the blood of Jesus Christ. The passion in his tone was all thrilling with intense desire to lead his followers to the Advocate who could plead their cause and bring them off victorious.

He overcame his ambitions. Rome was never conquered. Cæsar still reigned. But instead of an earthly throne and a temporal triumph, he looked away to the new heaven and the new earth and he saw his reward there. "To him that overcometh."

So we have taken this brief text and set it to the music of John's own life. It meant everything to him. Yes, but what does it mean to us? It is a slight matter that, in this great battle of life, others are winning; of little consequence that eighteen centuries ago an old and weary man, laden with spoils of self-victory, passed up to his inheritance. He who has failed to fight, or failed to win, has no place in the triumph of this cause. . . My brother, you must take these words and plunge them into the baptism of your own life. Have you overcome? Have you sacrificed ease and substance for Christ? Have you given up the day dream and found the reality? Have you conquered the easily besetting sin? Have you laid aside the personal ambition that came between you and a Christian life? Then you shall also inherit. Livingstone gave up home for Christ and died in Africa. To-day Africa, looking to the Lord, is his inheritance. Henry Martyn, the laureled prize man of his year in the University of Cambridge, turned from that bright vision and buried himself in Persia to preach. To-day his name and memory have roused hundreds of young men to like sacri-

fices. John Bunyan met and vanquished the easily besetting sin. From the conflict he came an old man prematurely wrinkled and worn, but now he inherits the land which he pictured so vividly and not a trace of trouble rolls across his peaceful breast. At the height of his popularity, William Wilberforce turned his back on the honors of place and power and went forth to champion the cause of the slave. He inherits to-day the grateful homage of millions who, but for him, might be in bondage yet.

"Blessed is he that overcometh." Wave after wave breasted and conquered becomes in its time a friend and an ally, and lifting the strong swimmer on its mighty crest sweeps him nearer to the shore.

V

THE CHARACTER AND MOTIVE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

—*1 Corinthians 15 : 58.*

V

THE CHARACTER AND MOTIVE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

One of the fairest flowers in the Alps blooms on the verge of the eternal snow. Around it, like the sheeted dead, the great mountains lie, silent and motionless, while this one sign of life blossoms into a loveliness all the more striking from contrast with the gaunt and dreary barrenness which it invades. So these brave words, bracing our hearts afresh for present duty, bloom, like that Alpine flower, on the very fringe of death. They conclude a chapter which, more than any other in the Bible, links itself in with our saddest and most solemn memories. Here, I think, we have one proof among many of Paul's surpassing skill in generalship. It is said that the true soldier displays his genius not so much by winning the victory as by following that victory up when it is won. An inferior commander would have suffered his troops to rest upon the great triumph with which the chapter draws to a close. After crying "thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," how natural, and how welcome

sweet repose would have been. But Paul knew that the moment of victory is often the most opportune for pushing forward; and into that one connecting word "therefore" he pressed the whole force of the previous argument. The sober strain into which the masterly demonstration runs, is like the course of the river, deep and strong, below the cataract. All the passion of the waters pours itself into that narrow channel. Because of all that has just been proved, "therefore," adds the apostle, "be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

There is one more preliminary observation which needs to be made, and it has reference to the phrase, "the work of the Lord." We must beware lest we take an insufficient and partial view of the apostle's meaning. By "the work of the Lord," I believe he intended us to understand the whole Christian life, active and passive. Life to him was a work, an edifice upon which he labored continually, and in which his to-days and yesterdays were "the stones with which he built." Our conception of "the work of the Lord," so far as we personally are engaged in it, is of something to which we turn in moments of leisure or in hours of special earnestness. Paul's conception of the work of the Lord was that it was "the life which he lived in the flesh." In one of the old convents

of Italy they still show the humble cell where a famous painter lived and labored many centuries ago, the poor, narrow home to which only the brethren of his own order were wont to enter. On the walls of that cell he put his finest work, covering them with "luminous frescoes, beautiful beyond the power of words to describe." Here, rather than in the pictures which went abroad and made his name illustrious, he was seen to the best advantage, for here it was that his whole life was spent. This was indeed himself. And was not this just the thought upon which our Lord laid such emphatic stress, when, in the prospect of the cross he said, "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do"? The work of the Lord was the life of the Lord; and with ourselves, in like manner, the work of the Lord is the whole Christian life, lived in the spirit and spent in the service of the Master.

Taking this phrase, then, in its broadest and truest sense, we have before us this subject for our study, the Character and the Motive of the Christian Life, its character suggested in these words, "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," its motive expressed in the concluding sentence, "forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." The character of the Christian life, "Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

The two features which are made most prominent here may seem at first sight to be in violent contrast, even if they be not in actual conflict with one another. We are wont to think that the church of Christ divides itself into two armies, the active and the passive; or, as they are here described, those who are "steadfast and unmovable," and those who are "always abounding in the work of the Lord." But this division is artificial and false. The truly consecrated Christian course is not one only, but both of these. It is like the boat which, while firmly anchored in the harbor, swings loose and free with the tide. He only is really active in the work of the Lord who, in the calm and silent depths of his nature, is steadfast and unmovable; and he only is really steadfast, whose inmost soul is like the axle of the wheel, which while motionless itself, is nevertheless the center of motion.

1. First of all, then, we need to be steadfast and unmovable. These two words are not mere echoes the one of the other; but (so far as we can learn), in the mind of the apostle each pointed to a distinct source of peril to the believer. The exhortation to be "steadfast" was needed because of the dangers lurking within the soul of the Corinthian. A nature such as his, intensely active, absorbed, and interested in the labors of the hour would, all too soon, strike deep roots in the present. There would be no upward-glancing eye; no forward-

hastening foot; no hand outstretched, even now, to touch the goal and grasp the prize which as yet were invisible. So, before he was himself aware of it, that Corinthian believer would be "moved away from the hope of the gospel." We learn here, from the order in which this entreaty comes, where our most serious peril lies. If we be stablished in ourselves, all the onsets of external fires, so far from moving us, will only serve to make us still more strong in our position; but if we, like the Corinthians, have loosened our moorings in the deep sea of truth, then we also shall be torn from our anchorage and, like that hopeless vessel in the Adriatic which carried Paul toward Rome, shall be driven before the wind and "exceedingly tossed with the tempest."

With the word "unmovable" we are led to think of foes that are outside the soul of the believer. How hard it must have been in a city like Corinth to keep alive this great faith in the coming and kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. No church pointed heavenward, no sabbath bells rang out upon the tranquil air, no day of worship indeed was recognized as distinctly Christian, no graves bore inscriptions full of "that blessed hope"; beyond that glorious blue sky there seemed no "heaven of heavens," beyond the glowing sunset of to-day no sure and certain daybreak on an eternal morrow.

You see how intense was the strain on the soul of these early Christians, first from their own training in the desolate hopelessness of heathenism, and secondly from the absence of food for bright anticipations in the world around them. So you can appreciate the burning earnestness of this chiefest of the apostles, when he took this tender and feeble faith and trained it up about his most powerful argument, much as the frail vine in the forest clings and climbs around the sturdy oak. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable."

2. The second feature in the Christian character to which he points is its activity. "Always abounding in the work of the Lord." This word "abounding" was the most expressive word which could have been found for the purpose which Paul had in view. It means "over and above," "exceeding in number and in measure," "more than enough." The grace to which the Corinthians were urged was not simply continuance. We know how, in the fierce competition of trade, the business must not merely hold its own; it must make inroads upon the territory around it; it must be forever devising some new departure. It is only in the church of Christ that men dare to use the phrase: "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be." You will search the New Testament in vain for such words as these. The fear of the apostle seemed to have been that his brethren should dream for one

moment that they had touched perfection. He would inspire them with what I might call "a noble discontent." It is said that when Thorwaldsen, the sculptor, had completed his statue of Christ he burst into tears. For the first time he found himself satisfied with his work; and he knew that satisfaction to be the death-knell to all future growth. Henceforth, he declared, his powers would decline. But we? How little need there is for such tears with us. How far off yet seems this ideal, which towers up before Paul, of a life which, in its wealth of consecration rises higher and ever higher, until with a holy recklessness it brims over, "abounding in the work of the Lord."

Thus, then, welded together into one massive whole, we see these two characteristics of the truly Christian life. Permanent, inasmuch as it is "steadfast and unmovable," like the everlasting hills; yet progressive, inasmuch as it is "always abounding in the work of the Lord," like the rich and exuberant vintage which clothes the walls with leaf and flowers and fruit.

We pass forward to speak of that which occupies the remainder of the work, viz.:

3. The motive of the Christian life. "Forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." Is it not remarkable that the grandest argument in the New Testament, that which has spanned innumerable graves with the rainbow of

hope, that which has lifted up so many hearts crushed under bereavement, that which has, by its mingled pathos and persuasiveness, driven despair from so many of its victims, should have been written for the sake of a handful of poor Corinthians in danger of slipping back into the heathenism from which they had only partially been reclaimed? This was indeed "abounding in the work of the Lord." Throughout this whole chapter we seem to hear, as an unworthy undertone, the ignorant and querulous questionings of these brethren in Corinth. It was they who suggested that there was "no resurrection of the dead." It was they who said, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." It was they who asked: "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?"

Paul met this half-concealed and half-active unbelief by an argument for the resurrection which was based on historical facts in reference to Christ himself, and fortified by analogies from nature, and completed by a revelation of the eternal purposes of God in the government of his world. "Not in vain, beloved brethren," is the conclusion of the whole matter, "not in vain in the Lord is your labor."

Let us glance at the sources of instability and restlessness in the soul. They are two: fear and doubt.

Fear, in the life haunted by a sense of unforgiven sin. There is no force in the moral influence

which a man exerts so long as he constantly finds himself casting this dread shadow of unpardoned guilt. I remember once to have seen a rusty chain swung from one rock to another, and hung just at the height where the advancing billows gathered to a crest, so that, as the wave rolled on, it was suddenly cut in twain by the cable, and fell, broken and impotent, into the wild waste of waters beneath. Such is the life which in its most enthusiastic endeavors is paralyzed by the consciousness, "I am unreconciled to God." Now the words of the apostle are specially directed to this fear. Death is vanquished because sin which is its sting has been drawn: "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The second cause of instability and restlessness is doubt. "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen; and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." We have already spoken of the hard conditions under which faith in a future struggled in that old heathen world. The continuous effort of the apostles and of the believers was to beat back this darkness which, creeping up on all sides, shut in and threatened to quench the hope of immortality. I say "on all sides"; and was this not so? We have been so long accustomed to the light and splendors of the Christian revelation that it is with our religious feeling as it is with our position in this

century, we find it hard to realize that men once groped along our streets lit by the flickering ray of the feeble oil lamp; that men once steered across the tempestuous Atlantic guided only by the pale light of the stars; but harder yet to put ourselves in the place of those who were without God and without hope in the world. Judaism faltered and hesitated, as it asked in its despair, "Shall the dead praise thee, or any that go down into silence?" Heathenism wrote above the sepulchre in which it had entombed all that was most precious, "*Vale, vale, in æternum vale.*"

Life then was like some fair structure, noble in design, glorious in detail, but with a crack gaping in its foundations. It had no eternal foothold. Men had no faith then, as they have no faith now, in that philosophical immortality which assures us that when we have lived our lives out we shall perish, but that which is good and true will attain to perpetuity in the sum of human virtue among our descendants. I can think of nothing much more pathetic than the close, often no doubt abrupt and premature, of a virtuous, moral life in Corinth or Ephesus or Athens. Sometimes, when I have looked at a certain famous painting of an old English warship, towed slowly and sadly to her last dock, there to moulder and perish, I have seemed to see the heathen life with its final anticipations. Drop the anchor and let the master-

piece of God fall to pieces, the spoil and the sport of the idle wave.

Oh, how glorious when, through this dark perplexed air, rang out the Christian confidence: "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." Christ had brought life and immortality to light in his gospel. The aspirations, the prayers, the works of faith, the labors of love, of these early centuries were caught in the current of immortality; they were endued with the power of an endless life; they were "not in vain in the Lord."

No, not in vain. The apostle was writing from Ephesus. His eye, lifted from his page, his mind, pausing in this great argument, would rest upon that temple, the pride and boast of the whole world, which impressed him so powerfully with "the splendor and the emptiness of the pagan worship of that age." As we approach the end of the year, how much there is in human endeavor and human enterprise and human achievement which impresses us in the same way. In the realms of politics, of commerce, of art, of mere pleasure, how the wintry wind which blows across the piles that eager hands have raised sighs "In vain." How much is like that magnificent mausoleum, which the millionaire raised for his last resting-place, and which now awaits the body that cannot be found. You pass into the heart of many a human hope and

many a human effort, only to find that there vanity and emptiness are throned supreme.

But the apostle's teaching, the teaching of this Christian faith which we hold so dear, is that through whatever changes the believer has to pass, whatever—like the snow on the hurrying traveler—has to fall, to gather, to melt away, he himself is preserved. He lives forever. Dear brethren, shall we not pass forward to meet the New Year under the mastery of this persuasion the most solemn, the most inspiring, the most dignifying of all the many confidences which our hearts can cherish? No chill wind blowing athwart that narrow channel of death shall freeze our high activities into the awful calm of a river arrested and petrified into the eternal ice. As our "work in the Lord" sails between these lofty barriers, it shall be with the song of triumphant assurance, "O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? . . Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Work on, work on, nor doubt, nor fear,
From age to age this voice shall cheer;
Whate'er may die and be forgot,
Work done for God, it dieth not.

VI

COUNSEL AND WORK

This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.

—*Isaiah 28 : 29.*

VI

COUNSEL AND WORK

A THEME the most suggestive and entrancing occupied the prophet's mind. He was thinking of the exquisite adaptation of means to ends in the government of God. This theme had apparently been started by a very slight illustration of it. He watched the husbandman at his toil, and he marked how when he threshed now the fitches, now the cummin, now the bread-corn, he chose for his purpose not the same, but various instruments. He suited the implement to the material with which it had to work. To do this indicated forethought, and that was itself the fruit of past experience. "For," saith Isaiah, "his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him." The power with which we think, the power with which we act, are alike from God.

> They are but broken lights of thee :
> And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

One step further, and the speaker stood at the fountain head. "Through nature he passed up to nature's God." The husbandman's brain and the

husbandman's hand are from him. But the maker is more than his masterpiece. The creator is more than the creature. Such intelligence and skill as the Hebrew farmer showed came from God; but like rays of light pouring through a broken and clouded crystal, they only faintly shadowed forth what he himself was. "He is wonderful in counsel. He is excellent in working." You will see that we have an argument for the existence of God; and that it is an argument which is redeemed from the sphere of speculative theology by an application to divine interposition in the matters of every-day life. For this reason we are wise to study it ourselves; and in doing so we will first consider, and then we will apply the prophet's words.

1. Consider the arguments of our text. "Great in counsel, and mighty in work!" exclaimed Jeremiah; and so gave expression, in briefest and most striking form, to the thought which I have now to enforce. What is it that is remarkable here? Surely the combination in one being of the wisdom which plans with the power which performs. Well may that be called remarkable! Proverbially the inventor is a poor man. He labors, and other men enter into his labors. "Old men for counsel," says an adage with which we are familiar, "and young men for war." The type of mind which sits, like Mary, at the Master's feet, is distinct from, very often it is in antagonism with, the type of mind

which, like Martha, is "cumbered about much serving." In your families some children are already developing the studious and thoughtful natures, others the active and executive natures. In your circle of acquaintances you recall at once the men who think but fail to put their thoughts into deeds; and the men who are mere drudges, and carry out mechanically the designs and projects of others.

Because these two natures are so seldom united, there is frequently failure where we should look for success. Doctor Pressensé, the Protestant Church historian, has noticed how this happened in the last century in England. There came with Wesley, Whitefield, Wilberforce, Newton, and others, a great awakening to spiritual life. It was intensely active. But it was practical only. It was not accompanied, as in the earlier Protestant Reformation, "by a deep and powerful impetus in the domain of thought." It produced no profound thinkers. Consequently it was narrow and bigoted; and when its first fervor had died away, it left a residuum of narrow and bigoted men. The preaching of to-day, in like manner, which insists on work, and has no time for meditation, for thought, for retirement, carries the sentence of death in itself. It is using up its vital forces and taking no steps to renew them. A perfect nature, or a nature which looks toward perfection, must be both "wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working."

The nequality between counsel and working is, however, essentially human. Think, now, what are its causes. I will mention only a few.

The first is the uncertainty of human life. It is affecting to open Macaulay's "History of England" and find him starting to write annals which are to reach down to our own times. Affecting, because although begun in his prime by the man with the most richly stored mind of the nineteenth century, and although crowned with such praise as few books have ever received and such a fortune as few books have ever reaped for their authors, yet it remains only a fragment. Death, grimly smiling when the ardent historian penned that confident sentence, came after a while to sever the connection between the fertile brain and the facile fingers.

Another reason for this inequality I find in the changeableness of human opinion. Men weary of their plans. The nervous force is exhausted in the effort of devising. The bridge is built on paper, the enterprise is started, the massive foundation of a pier or two is laid, and then the project is abandoned. The swift river rolls along and sings in its mockery of human fickleness, "Men may come, and men may go, but I flow on forever."

At other times to will is present with us, but how to perform that which is good we find not. Where is there a more melancholy study than that which is offered in the history of legislation? I suppose

that there are laws enough in this State, as in other States, to punish every form of crime; to enforce purity, honesty, and justice; to shut up every haunt of evil and to make this city a new Jerusalem and this State a garden of Eden. We do not, indeed, enforce them; but then we compensate for that failure by making fresh laws. What is lacking? Only the connecting link between devising and doing. Only "the power behind the throne," the mighty flood of practical public opinion. A city of nearly one hundred thousand people should be a committee of the whole to do what it has decided ought to be done; but as it is, it is fortunate if it can muster a council of thirteen to toil at the thankless and ungracious task of forging the missing link between counsel and working.

I mention as a further cause of failure the absence of harmony between our places and our materials. One of the grandest conceptions of Michael Angelo remains a fragment yet, because his block of marble was insufficient for his sketch. The world is full of such fragments. Some of us have ideas which are too much for our powers of execution; more of us have more machinery than steam, more engine than motive power. When the whole passionate soul of the ocean puts itself into the lips of a billow bursting against the cliff, the poet sings, and singing expresses oh, how many a longing but vain ambition:

> Break, break, break,
> On thy cold gray stones, O sea!
> And I would that my tongue could utter
> The thoughts that arise in me.

Lastly, there is a great gulf fixed between our projects and our performances because of the inevitable effect of growth. Men outgrow their own thoughts. You smile at the El Dorado of your child—you have left that long ago. But so doth the young man smile at the boy; and so doth maturity smile at youth; and so doth old age smile at maturity. Old man! you could gratify the utmost longing of fifty years ago if you chose; but you do not choose. "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity." Now I am not saying that we never carry out our plans; but I am saying that we rarely do so. We battle against all these hostile influences. And you never knew the life that was so entirely free from them that it never failed to do what it desired. If, then, we can find a Being who rules and regulates not this earth alone, but this universe; not this universe only, but others, away in infinite space, and in whose government the means are always adapted to the end and never fail; one whose design is carried out in its entirety; one who never has to take down any part of his building because he was better as an architect than as a builder; one whose works, slowly but surely unfolding, reveal his first purpose, then certainly we

find God. "This is the Lord of hosts, wonderful in counsel, excellent in working."

2. I pass on to illustrate and enforce this argument. Already I am needing to heed my own warning—I find my text too vast for my sermon; and this must be my excuse for gleaning only a few from the teeming illustrations which suggest themselves now.

My first picture, then, shall be taken from creation. This world is a thought of God, and that thought remains just what it was at the first. Centuries of experience have not altered his mind one whit. In the drift, I cannot say how many thouands of years old, rude implements are found—the first tools made and used by man. This was what the primitive man was equal to in handicraft. But follow the history, the aims, the achievements of the human hand since then. We do not live in primitive huts, fight with primitive weapons, wear primitive garments; but that hand is the primitive hand. This is the hand of Adam in Eden. This is the hand of Noah when he builded the ark. This is the hand of Raphael when he painted the Sistine Madonna. This is the hand of Fulton when he put together the first steam engine. As man has advanced in commerce, in art, in science, has there been discovered any inability in that hand to come abreast of his development? Never! But development must be on the line of foresight, else there

will come a crash. The brain will get ahead of the hand. When God created that hand, which for centuries did nothing better than fashion rude flint implements, he devised it with mechanism adequate and adapted to ply the oar, turn the shuttles, wield the pencil, guide the engine, hold in its deft and fearless fingers the straining reins of these impetuous years. This hand also "cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working."

My second picture, providence shall furnish. Providence is a thought of God. "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?" He has foreseen and arranged for the slightest incident in your life. The ripest science of to-day smiles at the idea that there is any such a thing as chance. There is a law of storms. The fall of meteoric stones is as much in the line of law as the rise and fall of the tides. Every man's life, as a great New England preacher put it, is "a plan of God." Yes, and in so far as any life is obedient to that plan is it also a performance of God. I cannot make music or order out of it. The player in the mighty orchestra is equally perplexed. He is too near the music. The painter, toiling up in yonder dome, is also in bonds to the position. But come away from the orchestra. Listen, as the melody disentangles itself from its prison in cornet and harp string and

tymbal and comes bounding to meet you like an enfranchised slave exultant in its liberty! Stand at a distance! See how the form grows out of the fresco, and every figure steps forth from the canvas instinct with affluent life. Brethren, we are yet entangled in this music and we ourselves are painting this fresco. Wait! If it be God's will, wait! Oh, how in the great hereafter the psalm of our life shall roll out in its perfectness, and this life be revealed from its pictured pages as the Lord's doing and marvelous in our eyes! "This also," we shall cry, "cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, wonderful in counsel, excellent in working."

I turn to redemption for my last illustration of God's wonderful counsel and excellent working.

The Cross is a thought of God, "unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness." Whence did it come? I said that this hand was in God's mind from the beginning; but more amazing still, so was this Cross. The Lamb was "slain before the foundation of the world." The mustering forces marched forth from the gates of heaven to celebrate the birth of this fair earth; the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy; day unto day uttered speech, and night unto night showed forth knowledge; the sun came forth from his chambers in robes of splendor rejoicing as a strong man to run a race; but over all floated a banner on which the hand of God

had worked a blood-red cross. What did it mean? What? I need not to ask you. This, in the dewy daydawn of the world's history was God's thought as to sin and its heinousness, as to man and his preciousness, as to himself and his mindfulness. Perish all else rather than this. Does any one here question its ultimate victory? No thought of God's ever suffered defeat; this least of all. Souls in this church to-day are whispering, "Of the adaptation of creation we know little; the providential guidance of our Father in heaven is a mystery often sorely perplexing; but the Cross! That cleansed my sin. That eased my heart. That kindled my hope. That anchored my faith.

> Great God of wonders! all thy ways
> Are worthy of thyself, divine.

Creation, providence, redemption, they pass as though in rapid and inspiring review, and we sing:

> These, as they change, almighty Father, these
> Are but the varied God.

"This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, wonderful in counsel, excellent in working."

But every masterpiece implies completion. What are these illustrations, after all, but illustrations of that which is unfinished yet? When God created this earth he had in his thought not it alone, but also, and better far, the new earth wherein dwelleth

righteousness. When God formed this hand, he formed it not only for the handicraft of earth, but also for the victory of heaven, when it shall wave the palm and lift the golden crown and cast it at his feet. When God planned this life, he planned it as the portico and vestibule of the life beyond; we shall only see how glorious it is when we pass within the temple through that beautiful gate. When God provided "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," it was as the sacrifice for human sin indeed, but also as the center of human praise, the Lamb in the midst of the throne.

I pause this morning and let these stammering words die away. Other lips take up the strain. From the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory beyond and from many who, once worshiping with us here, now wait for us yonder, I hear the outburst of rapture as eternity unfolds the hidden meanings and purposes of time—"This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working."

VII

THE NATURALNESS OF PRAYER

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee.

—*Matthew 6 : 6.*

VII

THE NATURALNESS OF PRAYER

HAVE you ever remarked how little Christ said about the obligation to pray? Whether men ought to pray or not—a subject about which fierce battles have been constantly waged since he came—was not a subject that he made at all prominent in his teaching. For this there may have been two reasons. If prayer is a natural instinct, one which can never be completely crushed out of our nature, then it is wasted breath which argues about it. As well argue about the warmth of the sun or the freshness of the mountain air. Then, again, it may be that men cannot be reasoned into praying. The formal spirit which in loveless obedience to command "says its prayers" is the spirit of a slave not of a son; and the keynote of all true prayer Jesus himself struck when he said, "After this manner therefore pray, Our Father——."

The authority for prayer is found in two laws, the ordinance of God and the constitution of man. God commands it, and we are prompted to it. We might almost say that these are not two but one—as law is one whether it be written in the

statute books or whether it be lived out in the conduct. Law finds its utterance in life, as the soul of song leaps to expression in the voice of the bird, and as the hidden beauty of the flower is made manifest in its form and color and fragrance.

We will start this morning, then, where Christ himself touches upon this great subject. The obligation of prayer is taken for granted. "Men ought always to pray." Our present purpose is to show that prayer is in line with our constitution, and our theme is the Naturalness of Prayer. There are three essential elements in human nature to which religion ministers. These are Dependence, Fellowship, Purpose. We are not supreme but subordinate. No man is his own master. We are not solitary, but created to find communion in the highest intercourse. We are not aimless, "dumb driven cattle," but are in this world for a distinct and noble purpose. These three essential elements in human nature are each in its turn dealt with in the text, and the naturalness of prayer is found in this fact. Prayer is the voice of human dependence; prayer is the craving for the most glorious fellowship; prayer is the onward sweep of the wave rolling shoreward toward the highest accomplishment. That it is all this makes prayer as true to man as it is true to God.

1. We will speak first of prayer and Dependence. "Thou when thou prayest." No definition

of prayer is accurate nor is any conception of prayer correct which leaves out of sight the fact that it is not, nor can it ever be, the language of an equal. Prayer is petition, prayer is the voice of the suppliant, of the subject, of the servitor. Is it untrue to our natural constitution in this feature? What is our life but a perpetual and ever-broadening discovery of dependence? So far centuries of dogged and persistent conflict have not lifted us up to a plane on which we are independent of nature. Our slave, is it not also our master? Pascal utters a world-wide truth when he says: "Man is but a reed. . . It is not necessary that the entire universe should arm itself to crush him. A breath of air, a drop of water, suffices to kill him." But not less true is it that we live in a condition of dependence upon one another. The child has few masters but the man has many. The beggar is not in bondage as the ruler is. The farther we travel in this journey of life, the higher we climb in its mountain ranges of honor and success, the more certain it is that we must give hostages to fortune. We are dependent upon the parents who bring us into the world, upon the family whose faces earliest print themselves on our hearts, upon the community in which we live as neighbors, traders, citizens. Upon the whole world are we dependent, for every man is himself a center, with a radius struck out from himself to the first point on which the dawn

glances, to the last over which the setting sun sheds its parting light. No man, I care not what his natural powers, can cut loose from these multitudinous moorings and yet retain his manhood.

Now we rise from these evident truths to the assertion that this fact of dependence is crowned in the consciousness that we are God's creatures, the works of his hands, the sheep of his pasture, and that in him we live and move and have our being. The old legend pictured Abram as worshiping the star until he saw it fade, and the moon until he saw her set, and the sun until he saw him go down. Then he cried, "O my people, I am clear of these things. I turn my face to Him who hath made the heaven and the earth." Dependent upon nature? Yes, but that is dependence upon my inferiors. Dependent upon men about me? Yes, but that is dependence upon my equals. I claim to submit myself supremely to One higher than myself. Here comes the work of the divine Spirit. There is another mastery than the mastery of circumstances, the mastery of self, the mastery of the race. "My soul thirsteth for God, even the living God." Then, "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities . . . for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Prayer is the response of the soul to this element of dependence in its loftiest ranges.

2. We pass on to speak of prayer and the second essential element in human nature: Fellowship. "Enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret." Here are three distinct thoughts. In prayer we must shut ourselves in; we must shut the world out; and we must find God in our retirement.

The first thought is seclusion. "Enter into thine inner chamber." By no means are we to limit these words to the thought of any one place. It is the barest formalism that reads here the demand for the oratory, the cell, the chamber of prayer. No such place had Jesus. Oftener than not, "cold mountains and the midnight air witnessed the fervor of his prayer." His feet brushed aside the dew from the long grass, he greeted the daydawn with supplication in some still retreat where the sky was the roof, and the meadow the floor, and the hillsides the walls, in nature's great cathedral of prayer.

There is deep meaning in the phrase "thine inner chamber" if we apply it not to the room but to the soul. Just as in the heart of Africa there are great forests which have never been pierced by the sun; just as far down in the ocean there are vast voiceless deeps stirred by no current, swept by no storm, so in each nature there is an inner chamber, a chamber of silence and seclusion. But what do the most of us know about it? Believe me, there

are dark continents nearer home than Africa, yet to be explored. So Fénelon says, in words never more true than now, "Oh, how rare it is to find a soul still enough to hear God speak!" Off the thronged highway in the city one can discover very close at hand slumberous courts and squares over which broods the very spirit of undisturbed restfulness, and so did we but care to do it we can turn in upon ourselves, and discover there in our heart of hearts an inner chamber, which may either be left to fall into dust and decay, or transformed into that "large upper chamber" of which Bunyan writes with such inimitable beauty, whose name was Peace, whose window opened toward the sunrising and where the weary soul can sleep till break of day.

(2.) Then the next thought is exclusion. "Shut thy door." "Man's prayers," says Emerson, "are a disease of the will." Possibly the philosopher put it thus because he felt anxious to believe himself to be in a state of robust health. But I recall the words now for the sake of what they grant to prayer. Prayer, anyhow, has to do with the will. Man is never more conscious that he acts as a free agent than he is when he prays. Coleridge, certainly second to no philosophic spirit of the century, says of prayer that it is "the very highest energy of which the human heart is capable, praying, that is, with the total concentration of the

faculties." He was drawing near to his end when he spoke of such intense compacted prayer as "the last, the greatest achievement, of this Christian warfare upon earth"; and then, bursting into tears, he laid his soul at the foot of the mercy seat and cried, "Teach us to pray, O Lord." No "disease of the will" drove Lincoln, as he himself has told us, in the tremendous crisis through which this nation was passing with him at the helm, to take refuge in passionate pleading with God. No "disease of the will" shut that door, outside the clash of weapons, the shrieks of the battlefield, the jarring voices of the council chamber, the ring of eager, watchful eyes wide as the whole of Christendom, and within, only one humble soul in the dust before God, where Moses, the patriot of Israel had prostrated himself before, and where this Moses of the nineteenth century prostrated himself now. ~~Ah, my brother,~~ To "shut thy door," to shut the strife out, to shut the silence in, is not the disease but it is the victory, the crowning victory, of the consecrated human will.

This seclusion and exclusion are performed for the sake of communion. "Pray to thy Father which is in secret." Other systems of religion have commended this abstraction of the soul from time and sense, but it is the distinctive glory of Christianity that in the heart of this silent region it puts not merely a great void, but God; and this God

not as the expression of law but as the embodiment of love. I remember to have seen, rising high above the shore on a wild and dangerous foreign coast, a figure of the virgin looked for by the sailors when they were far out from their homes, and called by them "Our Lady of the Sea." Shall we dare to say that when we penetrate the stillness of our inner chamber, when we reach the place over which the peace that passes understanding rules and reigns, we find a conception of God which is peculiar to that sacred retirement? Here, as not elsewhere, is "Our Father which seeth in secret." Now here the second essential element in human nature finds its satisfaction. It is not enough to be dependent upon God. Made in his image and likeness we demand a privilege which shall set us far above all the other works of his hands. We must have fellowship with him. This, prayer secures to us.

3. Now, briefly, let us think of prayer and the third essential element in human nature: I mean Purpose. It is sometimes objected to prayer that it is useless. To this it might be sufficient answer to say that the highest intellects, the warmest hearts, the most intensely practical natures can scarcely have been laboring under a delusion when they made a practice of prayer. They have believed that in this act "they moved the hand that moves the universe." But aside from this, surely

it would be strange if human nature raised by the law of dependence and by the law of fellowship to this unsurpassed height were to find that here, for the first time, its effort was purposeless! That were as though the child guided by a father's hand wandered enchanted amid the flowers of the garden; but then lifted high up in that very same father's arms found only a stony stare, a lustreless eye, a countenance without one gleam of recognition. No! Thy Father "which seeth in secret shall recompense thee." You have noticed that the Revised version omits, and properly so, the word "openly." How, we are driven to ask, came that word to be inserted at all? The answer is suggestive. No doubt it was put in just there in deference to the very general but very erroneous feeling that all prayer must have public response made to it. A significant addition, we say, for it points to a disposition to which all the centuries bear melancholy witness, to narrow the scope of prayer. "Openly" puts the answers of prayer at the mercy of time and of space, it finally closes the account with the end of the present dispensation, and it makes God the servant of man, bound to respond to man's demand in man's way. No! It is enough for us to believe that our Father shall recompense us. Here? Perhaps; or likelier still, not here but hereafter. In the eyes of man? It may be; or, still more probable, in the sight of

heaven. With recompense which the world can measure and weigh and label? Yes, or, better far, with the recompense which, submitting itself to no merely transient and temporary standards, throbs with the power of an endless life.

Now we may rest our case here. Wherever man is found he reveals to intelligent study these three essential elements. He is not free but dependent. He is not isolated but social. He is not aimless but made for a great purpose. He who created him not in vain has not left these elements, like belated travelers in the burning desert, to "wander up and down for meat," lifting lame hands to a brazen heaven, and despairing eyes to a vacant throne. Prayer is God's provision for an appetite which he himself created. In our dependence upon the most powerful, in fellowship with the most loving, in our harmonious activity with the most wise, we pray. Not to do so is not alone impious, it is also unnatural. Then we conclude that, as Thomas Carlyle expressed it, "prayer is and remains always a native and deepest impulse of the soul of men." It is permanent so long as human nature is permanent.

Is this so, and yet do I speak to one prayerless hearer? Such an one is an outlaw. He is running counter to nature as well as counter to grace. Nowhere in the universe does he find his parallel. The constitution with which he is endowed charges

him before high heaven as its worst enemy. A prayerless soul, said Augustine, "is a city without walls." Over such an one the fragrance of the flower, the song of the bird, the rising of the sun, the circling of the stars, mourn as over the defiant rebel, when led by him they would rejoice to follow the guidance of the loyal and loving son.

But to the praying soul the line of thought which we have pursued brings strong consolation. In the unfallen man of Eden, in the restored man of heaven, we have the complete triumph of the three great principles which here struggle for the mastery. Nowhere as in that inner chamber do we lose sight of the barrier which separates the seen and the temporal from the unseen and the eternal. Time melts into eternity, and earth fades away before the glowing splendors of heaven. My brother, have faith in God, as thou goest into thine inner chamber.

> If you will keep the incense burning there,
> His glory you shall see, sometime, somewhere.

VIII

FOR TO ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST

For to me to live is Christ.

—*Philippians 1 : 21.*

VIII

FOR TO ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST

In the olden times of chivalry, when the knight entered the lists to do battle, his helmet hid his features, and he was recognized, if it all, by the device blazoned on his shield and by the colors that waved on his spear. Himself unknown, he was content if only glory could be shed upon the cause for which he fought. In the holiest of all crusades, and the noblest of all chivalries, the apostle to the Gentiles hid himself behind the shield blazoned with the blood-red cross, and aspired after nothing so earnestly as to be lost in him who once died thereon. So complete was his own self-abnegation that it became a second and a stronger nature; and reading his Epistles now, we can detect it in even their slightest turns and in their most trivial touches. In the previous verse, for example, Paul expresses his resolve that Christ should be magnified in him; but when we expect him to say "that with all boldness as always so now also I may magnify Christ," he says instead "that Christ may be magnified in my body." It was not himself but Christ that was the supreme thought, and

his body, whether in life or in death, was no more than the stage upon which the glory of his Master was to be displayed. Who thinks, when rolling in the trough of an angry sea, of the glass in the light-house lantern through which the light streams forth to warn, to rescue, and to guide? To this impassioned self-surrender of Paul's thought, words can do but scanty justice. Whether we translate this sentence "To me to live is Christ"; or, more intensely still, "To me life is Christ"; or, with equal accuracy, "I live Christ," we fail to give adequate expression to his unreserved absorption of himself in his Saviour. But the form most familiar to us will answer our present purpose; which is to speak of a passion well worthy of a whole life's devotion. Then, and only then, is life worth living, when we can say, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." The Philippians, to whom he was writing, knew that this was not the language of rhetoric. He spoke words of truth and soberness. Present to their minds was the remembrance of that prison, that inner dungeon, those hard stocks. Here was a truth which the apostle had practised long before he had preached it. In considering it, therefore, as a statement which had been tried and demonstrated under their eyes, we will set before ourselves Christ, as the Stimulus, the Substance, and the End of a really consecrated life. "For to me to live is Christ." Yes!

1. Christ is the true stimulus of life. If we were called upon to characterize each of the Epistles by some one prominent feature, we should select joyousness as the special peculiarity of Paul's letter to the Philippians. Its motto might be found in its own pages: "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, rejoice." This gladsomeness is itself an effect, and flows from the exuberant buoyancy of a nature charged and surcharged with life. In its turn this life also is itself an effect, and must be attributed to one all-sufficient fact, that Christ was in Paul, and Paul in Christ. I remember to have seen a river, flowing through a great factory where one color was being extensively used, and which ran that color. Steeped and dyed in it, although it passed into the works a crystal stream, it left them a dark purple flood. So was it with Paul. All the currents of his being set through Christ and caught the glory of his presence as the waves will sometimes catch the splendor of a setting sun.

Now, it is a rule which needs to be recalled at this point, that the endurance and the victory of any life will be conditioned by its motive power. Incited by the high passion of patriotism a man lives for fatherland; and like General Wolfe when, mortally wounded, the shouts of triumph floated from the battlefield to his dying ear, he will cry, "I die happy." Starting at this, as perhaps the loftiest moral motive in life, we pass down through

the various stages of commerce, of study, of pleasure, of self-gratification. But what do we find? When Wolsey brings his wearied frame to the abbey, and dies of disappointed ambition; when Pitt, the greatest of English statesmen, breathes out a broken heart in solitude and desertion; when in our papers, morning after morning, we read of some embittered and shattered soul madly rushing on

> To death's mystery, swift to be hurled,
> Anywhere, anywhere out of the world,

what is it we see? This: That the stimulus of life has faded out, while the life itself remained. Like some huge vessel wrecked in midocean, abandoned of her crew, rent and dismantled, but lordly yet, the plaything of the billow whose sport is death, how often a human life becomes paralyzed because it first becomes purposeless. Brethren, it needs more than pleasure, or commerce, or study, yes, or patriotism can give us, to impel our lives successfully from the cradle to the grave. Life must be more than life, or it is less. "For me," said Paul, "life is Christ." You take your life, with all its intricate, its delicate, its marvelous mechanism, with possibilities which touch infinitude, and powers which throb with immortality, and it is as when a manufacturer seeks for water power with which to run his mill. Plant that life down by the streams of trade, of thought, of enjoyment,

of politics, and, in the majority of cases, life shall run awhile with swiftness and with ease. Now and again some wheel may stop, now and again the machinery may seem to you grander than the motive power. Yes, but once—and that for ease—the waters shall run lower and lower, and then die away; and that divine thing, your life, shall be like the screw of an Atlantic steamer, when, lifted clear out of the ocean, the emerald billows glide away from it, and it so fighteth as one that beateth the air. Paul planted his life on Christ, and it was as though one should plant his mill on Niagara. The mighty torrent might sweep and surge with measureless force through the works; at times he would have to cry, "Whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell"—but the impulse would not and could not fail. His whole being thrilled, as he himself declares, with "the power of an endless life."

2. Christ is the true substance of life. The height of summer is no time in which to study the structure of a forest tree. Clad in its thick robe of foliage, the trunk, the limb, the branch, are all hidden. So many a life is lost in its employment and occupation. Men remember what it was in childhood, before their business covered it up; men think what it will be in old age, when, stripped of its activities, the tree shall be "leafless and bare." They distinguish, and rightly, between the man and his work; between the life and the

living. Paul, however, in this one daring phrase, shows us that with the Christian this distinction should not exist. To him life was Christ. Let this thought fall into two halves, as it does most naturally, and we learn that life is Christ, and Christ is life.

(1) Life, to the Christian, is Christ. Shall we dare say this of anything else than Christ? I know that of the present and temporal occupations of life we do not dare; but brethren, carry the text further. A man who should avow, "My life is meat and drink, my life is raiment, my life is buying and selling, would be guilty of the crime of degrading his manhood. Self-blinded and self-bound, he would grind to the Philistine. But he who, a Christian, lets any other than Christ be his life, like Samson again, blind and bound, makes sport in the very temple of the idol gods. A Christian man fulfills his birthright when he measures his life by a creed, or by conduct, or by conformity to church practices, or by current morality? No! life must be nothing else, nothing less, than Christ. This was doctrinally true of the apostle. Were one to take his hands and feet, and nail them to a cross, that would, one fears, be an advance on any sacrifice we yet have made. But he had brought the proudest will, the most fearless and fetterless of natures, and crucified it. He never looked on Calvary, but he saw there another cross; he never trod this earth, but another footfall sounded in his ear. "I

am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

(2) Again, transposing the words, we may say that to the believer, Christ is life. What was life to Jesus? There was in it no haste, no lagging. No one ever did so much; no one ever did so much so easily. His life never paused to compromise. To its flow there was no refluent tide. Coming he cried, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God"; living he declared, "I do always those things that please him"; dying he breathed forth the words, "Father, into thy hands I commend my soul." This life, we see, was full, it was uniform, it was harmonious. To-day we pass into the Sabbath chamber of our beings; but oh! how brief, how broken, our glances into it through the past week. Just as there are rooms of splendor and beauty in the palace of the Vatican which the pope never sees, so are there in every nature neglected and unvisited places. Yes, and so must there be, until we dare take these words at their true meaning; until under the guidance of the Good Shepherd we turn to fresh woods and pastures new in our being; until the mighty music of the Master's spirit sweeps down from heaven "and fills all the stops of life with tuneful breath." "For to me to live is Christ." Yes!

3. Christ is the true end of life. When I am asked whether life is worth living, I inquire as to what is meant by life? What are its limits—

or is it illimitable? Is it a portico to a larger and grander building? Am I beating about in the mists that hang over a harbor, and lifting will they reveal a golden city and a cloudless sky and an eternal inheritance? If life means this present course, and if it be the end, then I am with the most hopeless of philosophers in declaring that to the majority it is better to die than to live. Brethren, it is not only that the future demands for its own sake a revelation; it is that it demands it for the sake of the present. One school of thinkers meets my inquiring spirit with doubts—they are not sure; there may be something beyond the grave, and there may not be. A second school meets me with a contented ignorance. They have passed beyond doubt, which carries with it the possibility of decision; they have attained to the conclusion that we cannot know. A third school meets me with blank atheism. There is no God. Well, then, what is there? I can understand the spirit of some earnest inquirer who should say: You have taken away the confidence of my earlier years, and given me ignorance; you have taken away the faith of happier hours, and given me doubt; you have taken away my God, and my father's God; you have stained and poisoned sweet pages in this book with scurrilous jests, yourself mocking a dead mother's dearest confidences, you have taught me to do the same; but still here is life. Life cannot

be a succession of tirades against Christianity ; life cannot be a series of presidential campaigns, life cannot be laughter, epigrams, rhetoric. Your doctrine of evolution, your survival of the fittest, your progress of the centuries demand something better than Christianity. Where is it? Paul said "To me to live is Christ." It was a certainty. What can you say? "To me to live is——" what? "Where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? The depth saith, It is not in me : and the sea saith, It is not with me. Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears. God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof. Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom : and to depart from evil is undertanding."

We look this morning, to narrow our range, on the professing church of Christ. What do we see? Especially in this country, where history and circumstances combine to make life full-tided, we see numbers of persons in every church in quest of a passion which is at all adequate to their instincts and their impulses. The moralist condemns the disposition to rush into politics or to plunge into pleasure. But not I! This buoyancy, this overflowing vitality, this keen zest is delightful. Come from some dreamy ancient city where life stagnates and curdles, and touch this, and it is like lifting your hand from a pyramid to lay it on an electric battery.

Has not Christianity itself quickened the currents of being? They flow fastest when they flow nearest to the cross. The psalm of life is loudest and most exultant when it is chanted in the resurrection garden. What we need is to take this exuberance of life and utilize it. Can we not find those who are sighing for a newer and richer passion? They are like Lot on the confines of Sodom, making excursions into the city, dallying with the forms, fair and fascinating, that are there, contradicting the solemn worship of this morning by the frivolous or purposeless trifling of this evening, and taking to their sleep, this night, a heart ill at ease, divided, weary, and lips which are too true and too honest to say, "To me to live is Christ"—though they would that it were so. But there are others who are like the heroes of that earlier time when they launched out into the deep and went forth not caring much whither they went, so only Christ went with them. To them wild waves were but the carpet for his feet, and hoarse winds uttered forth his voice; to them, of divine watchfulness and care "the stars sang and the sea"; to them, as to all undivided souls, came the inevitable honor of leaving a mark, deep and lasting, in the world.

Dear brethren, this life is worth living just in proportion as it is full of Christ. A poor rough bar of iron thrust into the fire, when it glows through and through with the splendor of an indwelling

spirit, then, indeed, it is mighty through God. We are not to possess this Christian life, but rather of it are we to be possessed. We are not to get this religion—that is easy; but we are to be gotten by religion—that is the effort and the occupancy of a life. Dying after a course of honorable toil, an eminent preacher of the truth said, a few weeks since, "I value my work more than my life." Yes, for it is the work that endures. A Christian? Then deep down in that nature lies the foundation which is Christ Jesus. You know whom you have believed. You cannot be deceived as to Him in whom you trusted perhaps now many years since. But let us take heed how we build thereupon. For we are laborers together with God; ye are God's husbandmen, ye are God's building. May he who was the author, be also the finisher of our faith.

IX

THE MAN WHO NEVER GREW OLD

(THE VIGOR OF MOSES)

And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died : his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.

—*Deuteronomy 34 : 7.*

IX

THE MAN WHO NEVER GREW OLD
(THE VIGOR OF MOSES)

HERE are two statements as to Moses when, on the top of Pisgah, he lay down to die; one as to his age, the other as to his vigor. He "was an hundred and twenty years old." This in these times was not remarkable. Aaron, his brother, who had died a little before, was as old, but his age is barely mentioned by the chronicler. What was worthy of note was not the age but the vitality of Moses. No dimness of vision as his eye swept over that unequaled landscape, as there had been no flagging foot when he climbed the mountain-side. At this day it is the second, and not the first statement before which we pause also, for it is not the quantity of life so much as its quality that tells. Who would care merely to exist for a hundred and twenty years? "To live and not to live," wrote the young Pretender, Prince Charles Stuart, in his dreary and dishonored old age, "is worse than death." A human life is measured not by its duration, but by its intensity. "Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay." Here was a man

who grew old but not aged. He is the perpetual protest against the disposition to measure every life by the same periods, the disposition which says with one of these popular generalizations which are as bright as they are fallacious, that at fifty a man is on deck, at sixty in the cabin, at seventy on a raft, and at eighty on a spar. In his splendid vigor Moses was on deck at a hundred and twenty and in full command of the ship.

Let us ask, What kept him young? Three springs fed the fountain of his perpetual youth. What were they? I answer—the absorption of self in a great enterprise, the controlling companionship of God, and the habit of looking onward.

1. Moses had lost self in a great enterprise. At the burning bush, forty years before this time, he had received from Jehovah his commission: "Come now, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." But long prior to this, when he was yet a young prince in the palace of Pharaoh, he had determined that to do this should be the work of his life. "When Moses was grown," we read, "he went out unto his people." From the splendor of the court he turned to the misery of the brick fields, and made it his serious and deliberate choice to be a Hebrew rather than an Egyptian. He did what not he alone, but in every age the heroes of the world have done; what

Alfred of England did when he gave up the quiet of the cloister for the conflict of the camp ; and John Howard, when he turned from his country seat to the prison cell ; and Wendell Phillips, when carrying with him little save his eloquence, he forsook the culture of Boston for the cause of the slave.

And who shall deny that in linking in his life with the great enterprise of freeing his people from their long and bitter bondage in Egypt, Moses took the best course for the development and disciplining of his own powers. It is not the strenuous so much as it is the self-indulgent life which eats out the strength and saps the fountains of our being. As Lowell sang to the poor man's son :

> There is worse weariness than thine,
> In merely being rich and great ;
> Toil only gives the soul to shine,
> And makes rest fragrant and benign ;
> A heritage, it seems to me,
> Worth being poor to hold in fee.

"Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." It is inevitable that we ask what his life would have been had he chosen differently. In that case the world would not have learned his name, unless perchance it was to be recovered from some dried-up mummy in the far distant centuries ; the world holds no place in its grateful heart for

the man who only exploits himself, and whose own confession when the end is reached is that "Life's cup is nectar at the brink, midway a palatable drink, and wormwood at the bottom." The grandeur of the enterprise into which Moses flung his whole soul kept him young.

But into it he needed to fling his whole soul. That he should stand at this hour on the top of Pisgah and see the broad territory which he is never to possess, is the last and crowning sacrifice of self. It is in keeping, however, with all that has gone before. Choosing rather, at the first he threw himself into the thankless cause of his oppressed brethren; then he prayed that not he but Aaron his brother might be the leader; at Sinai he pleaded that his own name might be blotted out if only his nation might be spared; in the desert he wished that not he alone, but all the Lord's people might prophesy. His life through we catch no single selfish word from his lips. And who shall say what sacrifices of his own tastes and powers he made in the accomplishment of his choice? It is only at the last that we discover how noble a poet was here, as only by one or two casual references do we know that he surrendered his home life, his wife and children in the absorption of his task. And now this is the end of it all. He has founded no dynasty; his own sons are left in deep obscurity; his grave even is to be hidden away; he is

about to obliterate himself. But "he that loseth his life shall find it." Winter dies in the lap of spring and summer fades into the glow of autumn, and so the whole rich year is rounded out. Moses is young at this moment because he is the incarnation of God's purpose; he is in the current of the world's forward movement; what are years to him who has running in his veins the life-blood of centuries yet unborn? "Winter," as Victor Hugo wrote in his old age, and as Moses with greater truth could say, "Winter is on my head but eternal spring is in my heart."

2. Moses enjoyed the controlling companionship of God. What may have been his own plan, if indeed he had formed one, when he went out to the brick fields to deliver his brethren, we do not know. You remember how "he looked on the burdens" of the Hebrews till his heart was stirred to a passion of patriotic fury, under which he struck an Egyptian taskmaster dead and buried him in the sand. From such outbursts revolutions have often sprung. But in this instance no revolution came. Four hundred years of servility and serfdom had taken the heart out of the people. No single impetuous blow could rouse the dormant national enthusiasm.

Defeated in his own rough conception, Moses went out into the wilderness, and for forty years abode in comparative solitude. Not suddenly, but

by slow degrees, God trained this servant of his for his work. Perhaps, as General Gordon said when day after day he listened only to the velvet tread of his camel's feet on the desert sand, "he learned himself and God." Certainly after the vision of the burning bush (which came to him when he was eighty years old), Moses left the quiet of the wilderness, carrying with him his recovered personality (he had almost lost it in the unheroic shepherd life), and now it was a personality inspired by a great religious purpose and directed by a divine presence. Recall the names of the men who have not alone borne the world forward, but also at the same time lifted it upward, and you will see that these have been their leading characteristics—a great personality, inspired by religion and directed by God. The form which this took with Mohammed, with Cromwell, with John Wesley, is for our present purpose immaterial, our interest for the moment is with the fact itself. And of these three points, far above them, dominating and directing them, rose the conviction of God's supremacy. You listen to it in the Ten Commandments and in every great utterance of Moses which has come down to us: "So the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him"; and also in his fear for Israel "lest they should say Our hand is exalted, And the Lord hath not done all this." He does not seem to have taken the

rose-colored view of human nature in which the sentimentalist indulges; no blighting disappointment came to him when the people failed to respond to their wonderful destiny—but always as both of these shadows rose, like the great mountains, this persuasion of God, as from everlasting to everlasting, the permanent dwelling-place of the soul, which now for a brief time lived in the wandering tent, as his forefathers also had done in their day. This is the sound philosophy of life, although sometimes it has to exclaim with the old Puritan: "Man is born crying, lives complaining, and dies disappointed. All is vanity and vexation of spirit, but I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord!"

3. The third source of vigor in Moses we find in his habit of looking onward. At the very beginning we are told in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that "he looked unto the recompense of reward." And now at the close he looks out and away over the land he is never to enter, and up into the face of God who was waiting to take him home.

It is not given to every man to see such a prospect as now lay at his feet, and certainly not to have such a guide to its leading points. The devil showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time; but it was Jehovah himself who showed to Moses the land westward to the sea and northward to the mountains and southward to the wilderness and eastward to the cradle of his

race. An inspiring prospect, and every foot of it was to fall to the lot of the people whom he had brought thus far. It made him young to behold it all, and even to know that in common with Abraham, who owned nothing but a grave in it, and Joseph, who did not even own as much as that, he was to possess it in the persons of his descendants. He took a fresh lease of life as he lived in the Hebrew of the future, just as for forty years he had lived in the Hebrews now camped at his feet. What was it to him that he should not enter into that land in person? In spirit he would. God buries the workman but the work goes on; and if what is best in the workman has been put into the work he goes on as well.

Then we think Moses lifted his eyes from that prospect and looked up. "He stands on the heights of his life, with a glimpse of a height that is higher." A traveler in Japan paused before a worker in ivory and watched him carving an exquisite figure. "Are you not sorry to part with one of these works on which you spend so much of your life?" "No; I expect the next will be more beautiful." The promised land was fair; it would be a golden memory. Heaven was fairer; it would be an everlasting possession. On him who looks onward and upward time's corroding touch has little power. So the end is in truth only the beginning. The forward melts into the upward

glance, and Moses is immortal. "No man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." No; for he has none. "Dead he is not, but departed, for the good man never dies."

A great purpose inspiring his life, a great presence controlling it, a great prospect unfolding at the very last—why should not Moses be young? Would you be prematurely old? It is easy to give you the prescription. Be concerned with things that perish as you use them; be selfish and narrow. You shall have your reward! Do you wish to be perpetually young? Then be the very reverse of these. Believe me, in the life of this world of ours, and of our nation, and of our institutions, and of each man and woman, "age creeps quickly on where there is unfaithfulness to the nobler instincts." It seems to me to be a tragic thing to reach the limits of life with parts of our nature, as Darwin said of his own lost imagination, "atrophied" through long disuse. What Christianity did for the world two thousand years ago it is doing continually for those who accept it with all their heart and soul and strength. It is quickening all their faculties and giving to them constant employment. The limbs grow strong with climbing Pisgah's steep sides and the eye keen with sweeping over the prospect from its crest; the heart which feels for Israel in its hunger and thirst can never be old, and the soul that weeps over its sins is

immortal in its sympathy." "Spring," says Emerson, "still makes spring in the mind when sixty years are told." And should you live until that score be yours you may be younger than you are at this hour, if you are living not in the memory of the wilderness which lies all behind you, but rather in the prospect of the Canaan into whose fair fields and fruitful valleys the next generation is to enter; and better yet, in the confidence which breathes in the great words with which the psalm that bears Moses' name opens: "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God."

I live for those that love me
And for those who hold me true,
For the heaven that bends above me
And waits my coming too;
For the right that lacks assistance,
For the wrong that needs resistance,
For the future in the distance,
For the good that I can do.

Can you say this? Then you have in you the secret of perpetual youth.

X

THE PROPORTIONS OF A TRUE LIFE

A month they were in Lebanon, and two months at home.
—*1 Kings 5 : 14.*

X

THE PROPORTIONS OF A TRUE LIFE

The building of the temple at Jerusalem was the first great enterprise in which King Solomon engaged. During twenty crowded years the city was full of workmen, many of them strange in face and tongue, bringing the luxuries of Egypt and the industries of Tyre to the doors of a simple, hardy race, and familiarizing the Hebrew with the arts and tastes of cultured life. Solomon's undertaking, in its turn, influenced the world that lay beyond his country and his capital. Our text reminds us that echoes of the building now rising in Jerusalem were heard in the ringing of the axes which laid low the cedars in the forests of Lebanon. Four classes of laborers were occupied on the temple. There were—toiling in the dark quarries, bearing the heaviest burdens—wretched serfs, driven to work by the lash of the taskmaster; a little better than they were the slaves, home-born, sold for debt or prisoners of war; on a much higher range moved the workmen of the king of Tyre, hired out by him, and skilled in the finest handicraft. Independent of all these were the native,

free-born Israelites, thirty thousand of whom worked at felling and transporting the huge cedar trees. These men were divided into three relays of ten thousand each; and one month in every three was demanded of each band. Their service was not paid, and the work of the officers, of Adoniram, who was "over the levy," was so suggestive of the bitter bondage of old Egypt or of the earlier curse which fell on Adam and Eve, that probably the utmost Solomon dared demand of a free-born, high-minded, and independent people, was a third of their time. "A month they were in Lebanon, and two months at home."

Reading these words in the light of our century, we are interested in them at once. If Jerusalem sent its echoes into Lebanon, Lebanon seems to send its echoes across the centuries and the seas to our own lives. This three-fold division of time, imposed by the will of an autocrat, is it not prophetic of the demand which may be heard rising from the lips of labor to-day and here? The president of one of the vast iron industries of our country has said lately that he would willingly—did competition permit—reduce the labor day in his mills to eight hours. The proportion is suggestive. It is not founded on an accidental or arbitrary calculation. That a man should not need to give more than a third of his time to working for his livelihood was one, but it was by no means

the chief reason for this division. Now as then the springs of life and being are touched by the decree: "One month in Lebanon, and two months at home."

1. Palestine was home: And the claims of the family needed "one month in Lebanon."

Look back, and you will learn that the institution of the home was the original basis of all social life. That life began when Cain, weary of his lonely wanderings, built a city and called it after the name of his first-born son. When man ceases to roam, ceases to be a nomad, changes the tent for the hut, makes for himself a local habitation, then, and not before, social life takes root. Look around, and you will see that at this hour the strong nations are the nations that have homes. The people which under the stress of war, in answer to the appeal of fatherhood, sends forth its sons, with the glow of the fireside on their faces and their hearts braced by the memories of the circle which will never cease to keep for them the vacant chair—this is the people that prevails.

Look within, and you will witness that the love for home is stronger and deeper than—shall we not say—any other human passion. In Longfellow's "Journal," the poet writes: "Paid my taxes; which gives one a home feeling"; and it is characteristic of the most amiable of men that he could find a reasonable cause for satisfaction in performing a

duty that is not always a delight. But there was reason in what he said. To have a home is worth the tax. Better pay taxes than receive relief. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." And only as we go forth to life, bidding farewell to the old home; only as accident or misfortune breaks up the home we have formed for ourselves; only as old age leaves us once more solitary, to recall with Job the day "when our children were about us," only then do we come to feel how deep that home love is. He was dying in the South seas, in a scene of tropical loveliness strongly contrasted with the barren hillsides of his native Scotland, when the old passion came over Robert Louis Stevenson, and he wrote, in words which have for their undertone the sob of a breaking heart:

> Be it granted me to behold you again in dying,
> Hills of home; and to hear again the call—
> Hear about the graves of the martyrs the pewees crying,
> And hear no more at all.

Walking, a lonely man, in the streets of New York, John Howard Payne caught, through an open wire door, the familiar strains of his own song, "Home, Sweet Home," and he sighed, "How little they know that the author has no sweet home of his own."

Up in Lebanon the Hebrew would have his tides of home affection too; and like all true and

pure passion this shall not be left to hunger unrequited. Let twice the time be given to its claim that is yielded to daily labor: "One month in Lebanon, and two months at home."

But I am also reminded that

2. Palestine was fatherland. Patriotism demanded "one month in Lebanon." Under Solomon, who remains in history and romance the most splendid of her monarchs, the country was reaching out in a policy of expansion. The king had allied himself by marriage with Egypt; he had also opened up direct communication with the Indian Ocean; he had cemented still more closely his father's friendship with Hiram king of Tyre. It was inevitable that the wider world would endanger the growth if not indeed the existence of a patriotism which had either in hope or fruition, ensconced itself among the hills of the holy land. Leave him in Lebanon, and the Hebrew may become enamored of the nobler heights, the ampler forests, the broader prospects, about him. He may choose to remain there, and work amid the tall trees. For its own sake, and with nothing beyond, as an end rather than as a means, work may become to him the ruling passion of his being. It has become this to thousands of his race since. At the opposite extreme to idleness—which was never a Hebrew vice as it is not ours either—is what one may call the secularization of time. A

friendly traveler in America has brought this near home when he has said: "Nowhere is there such constant and straightforward talk about money, nowhere is such importance attached to the amount of money which a man has acquired or possesses, nowhere is it taken so absolutely for granted that the object of a man's work is to obtain money, and that, if you offer him enough money, he will be willing to do any work which is not illegal; that, in short, the motive power with almost every man is his wages."

This unfair emphasis on business is a distinct menace to good citizenship.

No man can afford to lose his patriotism—to be practically and of his own accord, a "man without a country." When a commission on labor finds little children making matches, sewing shirts, working in coal mines, it interferes to protect the child. It must be saved from its parents. But how many men need to be saved from themselves. No man was ever intended to become a mere tool. The fact that the tool is so finely constructed that its labor is immensely remunerative does not affect that. The race horse should not be set to drag a dust-cart.

No country can afford to lose her ablest citizens. These workmen among the cedars of Lebanon were not the serfs and helots; they were the best of the Hebrew people; they belonged to the middle class, the class which has always yielded to the

land that cherished it, the richest results. They find their parallel to-day in the men who drive the wheels of trade, and foster the industries of the States, and control the markets of the world. Shall they stand off, absorbed in buying and selling and getting gain, while the political fortunes of their native land, of their country, fall into baser hands, or hands at all events less skilled than theirs? The despot and the demagogue find their opportunity only when the best citizens of any country surrender themselves to selfish pursuits, toiling among the cedars of Lebanon when they should be casting their ballots in Jerusalem. Of the two-thirds of time which labor has no right to touch, the very sanctity of the home demands that a fair share be given to these momentous public interests at which we are now glancing. The old rule was never needed more than it is to-day: "A month they were in Lebanon, and two months at home."

3. Palestine was the seat of the national faith, and the voice of religion said: "One month in Lebanon, two months at home." Those cedars were falling in Lebanon that the temple might rise in Jerusalem, and the temple localized religion. To think of the one was instinctively to think of the other. "A country," says Thomas Carlyle, "where the entire people is, or even once has been, laid hold of, filled in its heart with an infinite religious idea, has made a step from which it cannot

retrograde." The intention of the temple was to give outward form and expression to this great national faith. Was it not possible to worship in Lebanon—under the blue heavens, among the spreading branches of the fragrant cedar trees? Yes; but all experience testifies that if the man without a home ceases in time to be human; if the man without a country ceases in time to be civilized; the man without a temple will cease in time to be religious. Judaism was a localized religion and the instinct to place its sanctuary in the temple at Jerusalem must be respected.

And Christianity? Christianity also localizes religion. Not in any external place but in the human heart. So Jesus rises above the temple in Jerusalem and the hills of Samaria, and says: "The true worshiper shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: the Father seeketh such to worship him."

Christianity does more. Pointing to our daily work, to our home, to our country, it says: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." It does not claim that for love of God a man shall cease to labor to provide things honest in the sight of all men. It does not claim that for love of God a man shall forego the pleasures of home. It does not claim that for love of God a man shall neglect his duties as a citizen. On the contrary, Christianity raises all these by associating them with religion. A

rounded religious life needs them all. Toil is sweeter to him who remembers that Jesus worked at the bench, and Peter tugged at the oar, and Paul wove at the loom. The risk that work will become purely secular is a serious risk with us. The owner of millions who fell a victim to overwork the other day, had an office in his home as well as in his place of business, and gave himself no respite; but he lived in splendid philanthropies, and redeemed his wealth from sordidness by converting it to high uses.

The home, with all that it suggests, from the cradle to the grave, is immeasurably more precious when its successes and its disappointments, its sunshine and its shadow, its loss and its gain, are all "in the Lord."

Patriotism embitters and disappoints the majority of men who give themselves exclusively to it. Bismarck in his old age is tempted to believe that he has done more harm than good; and Wolsey can only sigh: "Had I but served my God as I have served my king!" But Gladstone's deathbed is cheered by nothing so much as by the news that his grandchild is devoting his life to Christian missions. A wider fatherland opens before the eyes of the dying statesman.

This, then, is the message which our text brings to us. The time has not come when we can afford to ignore it. Up there on the slopes of Lebanon,

with its noble trees falling as tribute to his home, his land, his faith, the Hebrew was reminded of the just emphasis of life when he repeated the words which are ringing in our ears still; words which, would we but dare to live up to them, might help us to leave far behind the Utopia of the poets and the daydream of the social reformer: "One month in Lebanon and two months at home." Not among the forest cedars but in the wilderness of Judea, Jesus laid the emphasis afresh on the same divine order: "Man does not live by bread alone"—by the bread of manual toil; by the bread of domestic peace; by the bread of acquired knowledge; by the bread of national prosperity—no, "but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." Put this first, and all these others, lifting their heads in grateful recognition of their true and divine leader, will fulfill each its appointed part in making life to be life indeed. "My most passionate desire," says Tennyson, "is to have a clearer and fuller vision of God." That vision shall be ours when we write up in golden letters as our rule of life the words of our text: "One month in Lebanon, and two months at home."

XI

THE RESPONSE OF THE BIBLE TO OUR INTELLECTUAL NATURE

His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

—*Psalm 1 : 2.*

XI

THE RESPONSE OF THE BIBLE TO OUR INTELLECTUAL NATURE

A LITERARY critic of our own day writing about the Bible calls it "great art." As such he refers to it in the same breath with the masterpieces of Dante and of Milton. This view of the Scriptures is not one to which we are accustomed. At first it may startle our minds, and almost shock our judgments. Does it not savor of irreverence to couple the word of God with any human production, however noble? But think again. It must, of course, be clearly understood that to study the Bible as a work of art is not to place upon its brow its kingliest coronet. The supreme glory and the unshared distinction of this book is that it is "able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Jesus Christ." Until it has done this, to admire it for any secondary quality is for a sinking sailor to praise the graceful lines of the lifeboat while yet refusing to be rescued by it.

At the same time, have you ever thought what a subject for honest congratulation it is, not only to have *a* Bible but to have *such* a Bible?

Incorporated into our religion, into our faith, into our worship, so firmly that we cannot conceive of religious faith and worship apart from it, to me it seems of measureless importance that the Bible is not a book to be ashamed of even in the presence of the warmest hearts and of the loftiest intellects. Of no other sacred volume in the world can the same be said. Our English Bible *is* "great art."

Assuming, then, that such a study of the Scriptures is fair and worthy, let me ask your attention to this one aspect of it: The response of the Bible to man's intellectual nature.

The human mind in its early dawning; look at it. What does it need? A savage gazing for the first time into a mirror whispered in hushed and awe-struck tones, "Oh, I seem to see a world of spirits." The mind that was in him looked forth from his eyes and from the features of his face. He began to understand what forces were within him as he saw them reflected there. Think of such an awakened mind. In order to do itself justice what is necessary? We reply at once, that mind must be informed; that mind must be broadened; that mind must be stimulated; that mind must be directed. If he who formed the human mind also inspired this book, then we shall expect to discover that the Bible informs, broadens, stimulates, and guides our intellectual powers. Now is this so? I answer, Yes, it is, for

1. The Bible enriches the mind. It is of vast importance that in our studies, as elsewhere, we keep the best company. The companionship of great subjects is in itself a liberal education. Open the Bible and at once you find yourself approached by themes of the first historical interest. No other book in existence teaches history as this book does. Let us penetrate no further than Genesis, and let us pause there at its first words, "In the beginning." The world has grown old now, but is it not inspiring to know that here we are to be informed how things were started? You feel much as you do when you pluck a fair young flower from among the knotted roots of some venerable tree. If men treasure Plymouth Rock, if they celebrate the year when Columbus pierced the mists and brought a message from the old world to the new, then in the same spirit we turn back to these chapters to live over again the days of our childhood as a race. Here, then, I see the first man; I watch the dawn of the first sabbath; with the fall I am present at the first sin; beyond the gates of Eden I shudder at the first murder; I am with Cain as he lays the rude foundations of the first city; I listen to the first prayer when men begin to call upon the name of the Lord; with Abraham I go forth in the company of the first emigrant and hearken to the earliest footfalls of that overland march of empire which, in the fullness of time, led man to our own

continent. Standing there in Palestine I see, as in a mirror, the faces of mighty peoples reflected: Egypt, Assyria, Greece, Rome, all cast their images upon that little plate. The book which begins with Mesopotamia, midway between the ancient East and the pushing West, closes on Patmos, that little island in the mid-sea whence civilization has sailed away and away beyond the splendors of the setting sun. Now what a wonderful book this is which transforms every mind that studies it into a traveler wandering among the mightiest nations and the mightiest names of all time! Does the Bible furnish a response to the awakened intellect? I answer, again, Yes, for

2. The Bible broadens the mind. As a general rule, the best-informed is likely to be the most liberal man. Ignorance is narrow and narrowing. Knowledge, if it does no more than teach us how little we know, makes us generous in our judgments and hospitable in the welcome that we give to new truth. It is delightful at her beck

> To burst all links of habit and to wander far away.
> On from island unto island at the gateway of the day.

Let us consider for a few moments in what this marvelous faculty, our mind, ought to be interested. (1) For one thing, in nature. That opening chapter of Genesis tells you how God created the heavens and the earth. The study of rocks and plants and

insect and animal life is begun there. I turn to the Psalms, and the hills clap their hands, the sea roars and the fullness thereof, the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork. With the crowd on the shore I listen to Jesus. The lily, the bird, the leaven, and the salt, the city on the hill, the treasure unearthed in the field, rise to my mind at once. I pass in among the golden wheat, and Paul walks at my side to enforce from those ears his noble argument for the resurrection of the dead.

(2) For another thing, we are interested in science. The problems with which men are concerning themselves to-day are dealt with here. The origin of life; the evolution of life on a progressive and ever-rising plane; the survival of the fittest until we reach the new heaven and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness—the Bible speaks to me about these.

(3) Further, we are interested in literature. As literature alone our English Bible is immortal. Daniel Webster read it through once a year for its thoughts and its imagery. Edward Everett studied it constantly to improve his English speech. At the present time it is announced that at least six romances are in the press (1890) founded upon the Bible.

(4) We turn from literature to art. What music is comparable with David's? Music thrills to the

(the Psalter?

strains of the "Creation," of the "Elijah," of the "Messiah." If sculpture and painting are not prominent in this book, certainly this book is prominent in sculpture and in painting. You would be lost in any picture gallery were you ignorant of the scenes and of the characters of the Bible.

From nature and science and literature and art you rise to philosophy. You are attracted by that. In this book the mind finds itself surrounded by the mightiest mysteries with which the intellect can grapple. "All the wonders of Greek civilization," Mr. Gladstone has said, "heaped together, are less wonderful than is the single book of Psalms, the history of the human soul in relation to its Maker."

More practical in your bent, you may be studying with delight political economy. To do so will be to discover that law finds its basis in the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy, and that twenty centuries of light and leading have not taught us as yet how to dare to live and let live in the golden splendor of the Sermon on the Mount. There is no problem rising to the surface at this present moment—and surely never were there more—which is not met by the teachings either of Moses or of Jesus.

Take this book in your hand, and whether your taste lead you into the field of nature or of science, of literature or of art, of philosophy or of political

economy, or if—better perhaps than exclusive attachment to either of these—you have a generous interest in them all, the Bible which informs will also broaden your mind in studying them.

3. Informed and broadened, the human mind needs, in the next place, to be quickened. The machinery must be put in motion. Remark, then, in answer to the inquiry, What further can the Bible do for the awakened intellect? that it will surely do this—the Bible stimulates the mind.

When the eyes of the intellect open it must be of immense moment where they open. To wake up in a museum amid the mummies of old Egypt or to wake up in Wall Street amid the roaring voices of to-day! It will certainly influence a mind permanently in which of these scenes it becomes conscious of its powers. To feel the stirrings of the new life with the themes of the Bible about you is like rising after a night of travel to find yourself among the Alps. Towering peaks encased in ice or sheeted in snow mount heavenward around you. There is inspiration in the sight and in the air.

This book deals with subjects of the first importance. Its coinage bears the image and superscription of the King of kings and passes current through all the centuries. A man never feels himself so small as amid these mighty Alps, but it is in itself an honor to be dwarfed by them. No petty

sling stone brings you down, but the sword of a giant. Men in all ages, men in all lands are never weary of debating the vast themes with which the Bible deals. God, man, sin, punishment, redemption, free will, eternity! Is it not something that, though I cannot scale these towering mountains, I can climb so far up their broad shoulders as to obtain far-reaching and inspiring prospects?

Further, these themes, perpetually recurring, are always among the burning questions of the day. Some aspect of theology is sure to confront us or some point in conduct. One age may be interested in speculation, another may be more practical. Our fathers would spend long days and nights in discussing a theological problem. We rather battle over those questions which are forced upon us by our modern civilization. The housing of the people, the rights of capital and of labor, our duties to our neighbors—these are matters which we debate. However this may be, the Bible has its word to utter. So long as the mind is what it is, so long this book will live and move and have a being.

Another stimulating thought is this: this book does not deal with the completed. There are boundless possibilities in the subjects with which it is concerned. The end is not yet. It points to the physical nature and it says, "As we have borne the image of the earthly, even so shall we bear the

image of the heavenly.'" It turns to the spiritual nature and it says, "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." The life that now is comes under consideration and it says, "Not as though we had already attained, either were already perfect." The perfect life and the life of Jesus passes before us and it says, "Let us run with patience the race."

Now it needs no further words from me to convince you that the intellect, awakening among mighty themes, seeing how these themes renew their life with every century, learning that to the matters with which the Bible treats there is ever an unfinished side, will keep awake. No mind can slumber in the companionship of this wonderful book.

4. I add one other consideration. The Bible furnishes a response to the awakened intellect, inasmuch as it gives direction to the mind in personal interests of the first concern. The Bible intensifies the mind. Time forbids us to do more than glance at this point. This book is the book *about* and the book *for me*. It has no message to the circling stars or the changing seasons. This Bible lies in the pulpit through the darkness and silence of the week. It does not stir to inquiry the pews or the walls or the roof, but bring a man in—at once there is activity. It speaks emphatically to man. Emerson says: "We infer our destiny from the preparation."

Yes; and if so, what a destiny it must be! The cross—I will speak of this alone—is a preparation for man's destiny. Christ is the preparation. The gospel is the preparation. My mind, which has been enriched among the pictured pages of Scripture, and broadened as it has led me into fields of art and science and literature and philosophy, and stimulated as the mightiest and the most momentous questions at its bidding have gathered all about me, is drawn to a point of electric fire with the inquiry, "What must I do?" "What is all this to me?" The very book which has had such tremendous power to stimulate now lays a hand of velvet on me and brings me to the arms of the Saviour. Clothed and in my right mind am I only when I sit at his feet.

Among the stories told of the early navigators of the Atlantic none is more pathetic than that of Sir Humphrey Gilbert. Becalmed amid the icebergs, he was last seen on the deck of his vessel with the Bible open before him. "He sat upon the deck. The book was in his hands. 'Do not fear! Heaven is as near,' he said, 'by water as by land.'" Like this heroic admiral, we find ourselves on this wide and wonderful ocean of life, and only the book which he read can tell us how to sail its perilous waters, how to meet its blasts and icebergs, how with honor to reach its further shore.

I have chiefly dealt to-day with the Bible in its

relation to the human mind. I have tried to justify the critic who, speaking of it only as a piece of literature, characterized it as "great art." Aside from all other considerations, I repeat, to me it seems to be matter for thankfulness that not only have we a Bible but that we have such a Bible. The world may refuse to obey its teachings, but the world will never cease to be fascinated by its pages. Turn any young and eager mind loose amid the contents of this book and you will see how rich, how generous, how alert, how intense that mind will become.

The practical conclusion for us now is this: Are we doing justice to this masterpiece of "great art," this divine gift to our intellectual as well as to our spiritual natures? I do no wrong to our reading when I say that it is not very much in the direction of great art. We are tempted to-day more than ever before to fritter our minds away among the papers, pamphlets, tracts, which pour ceaselessly from the press. We need to listen to the voice of the Master, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." "Pilgrim's Progress" could scarcely be written in this century. We know too little of our Bibles. It were no illiberal resolution could we determine that for this one day we would confine ourselves to its pages alone. The traveler in Rome will often spend weeks among the ruins of the eternal city. The shop, the suburb, the garden, the Rome of to-day, have no potent

charm with which to break the spell cast about his spirit by the fragments of that earlier civilization. But when, through the shining portal of Genesis, we enter the treasure city of the Bible, we undertake no journey among the ruins of the past. We are now in the noblest temple ever built, and as we press forward it is in the choicest company ever gathered and our aim and distinction is the grandest revelation ever made to the human soul : "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."

XII

THE VOICE BEHIND THEE

And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it.

—*Isaiah 30 : 21.*

XII

THE VOICE BEHIND THEE

Religiously, the age in which we are living is an age marked by two very strong and apparently conflicting characteristics. On its active side it is distinguished by aggressiveness ; on its passive side it is full of doubt. The first of these, Christian aggressiveness, need not excite our surprise. A century which has gathered in the great countries of Christendom such vast stores of wealth, almost inevitably comes to measure everything by a material standard. The force which can bring things to pass is the force to be respected. If by no other motive our religion is impelled to aggressive action that it may vindicate its right to exist.

Nor, I think, is there anything mysterious in the religious doubt of our age. The material development of to-day has been immensely indebted to science, to the genius of experiment. The spirit of experiment, however, is necessarily a spirit which questions. We "prove all things" that so we may "hold fast" that which is good. Consequently, this questioning habit has become a characteristic of our minds, and we need feel no astonishment

when it is carried into the region of our religious belief. Now one and now another of the great truths on which we have been nourished is seen quivering, as it were, in the white heat of the furnace; or perhaps about it gather the mists which obscure its clear outlines and leave it dim and undefined.

Under such conditions—and I believe that they have only to be mentioned for us at once to recognize them as familiar in our own thinking—what is our duty? Two answers are given to this question. The first counsels that, abandoning the sphere of speculation, we simply confine ourselves to action. Let us resolutely practise that "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father." But I am persuaded that in the end such a course as this must be fatal. How can a man long continue to do this when he has no certainty that there is a God, but only a belief in some mysterious force, or a faint reverence for what he calls "the power which makes for righteousness"? Faith is the motive to action, and if faith be dead or dying, then before long all energy must die away as surely as the wheels slacken and stop when the steam is shut off.

The second answer to our question while encouraging religious activity bids us now and then pause. Listen to the words of Isaiah in this chapter: "Their strength is to sit still. In returning and rest shall ye be saved." Their ears shall

hear a voice behind them saying, This is the way, walk ye in it. To do this is not unscientific. It is true to the teachings of all time. The discoveries by which the world is ennobled and enriched have been attained after months and years of patient research. The laboratory and the study have always done their work in silence. Only the results have reached the ears of men. An aggressive and material age needs to learn the priceless importance of a spirit of reverie and retrospect:

> For we, brought up and reared in hours
> Of change, alarm, surprise,
> What shelter to grow ripe is ours,
> What leisure to grow wise?

This is what we will attempt this morning. Let the curtain fall at once between us and the beckoning future. Look and listen to the past. "A voice behind thee." Three such I hear. The first rises from the pages of history, the second from the treasury of memory, the third from the mine of personal experience.

1. Let us listen to the voice of history. More perhaps than any other man the Hebrew was throughout all his national existence a man who lived in the future. Others might have their golden age in the past, not he. From Abraham forward the leaders of that great people lived and died, "not having received the promises," but having

"seen them and greeted them from afar." To become believers in Jesus Christ as the Messiah was only for them to have this forward glance intensified. "We are saved," said Paul, "by hope." "Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

While this is true, however, it is also to be noted that the Jew was in the habit of looking back. At critical times especially did he pass his national history in review. Jacob on his death-bed recounted the incidents of his pilgrimage. Moses, when Nebo rose before him, looked back on the journeyings in the wilderness. Joshua roused the enthusiasm of his people by retrospect. David in his last strains became the chronicler rather than the prophet.

To do this was not to weaken the force with which the eye, changing its range of vision, swept the future. The general has often kindled afresh the drooping courage of his soldiers when marshaled in the face of the foe by reminding them how in the heroic past victory has perched on their standard. Happily we live at a time when there is little need to insist that,

> Thro' the ages one increasing purpose runs,
> And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns.

We believe in God in history. "Call you these bare events?" we should exclaim with Oliver

Cromwell, did any one question this truth—"God pity thee!" John Newton was doubly right when he said that he "read the New Testament to see how God loved the world, and the newspapers to see how God governed the world."

Now here is a practical question. Beset with a hundred doubts as to the Christian religion when we hear this voice behind us, this voice of history, what does it say? It says many things, but two things I think most emphatically.

First, there can be religious progress only by faith, and this faith in the distinct doctrines so dear to the apostles, to the first believers, to the reformers, to the prime movers in the great religious revival of the last century. Whether they were right or whether they were wrong is not now our controversy, but we simply give the lie to all history if we deny that these men believed with all their hearts that Christ was the Lamb of God bearing away the sin of the world; that he died the just, for us the unjust; that we can be justified only by faith; that, ruined by the fall, we can be redeemed only by Christ and regenerated only by the Holy Spirit. Show me the forward step which has been taken by the mental habit which simply doubts. Criticism may very likely find many flaws in the characters of Peter, of Luther, of Wesley—but the truth remains nevertheless, that by their iteration and reiteration of the great doctrines I

have enumerated the world has been carried forward into purer living and nobler doing.

Second, religious history now for eighteen hundred years and more, further declares that precisely as in the days when Jesus was on earth the Holy Spirit was not given because Jesus was not yet glorified, so ever since that time, when Christ in his divine power as the Son of God, and in his redeeming power as the only Saviour from sin, and in his renewing power as the indwelling life of the soul has fallen into the shade, when preachers have dwelt on other matters to the neglect of Him who alone justifies the Christian preacher in his right to be—then spiritual death has followed.

Is not this voice in accord with our own observation? Come! let us hearken to it, for amid the many utterances of to-day this note reaches us with the incontestable force of nearly two thousand years.

2. Let us listen to the voice of memory. We pass now into chambers more sacred than any that history has builded.

> There's dearer dust in memory's land
> Than the gold of rich Peru,
> And firm are the fetters by memory twined,
> The wanderer's heart and soul to bind.

No wise person consents to a divorce between what he thinks and what he feels. Longfellow was right when he declared that he cared nothing

for a sermon in which he could not hear the heart beat. Religion is largely a matter of affection. Love is the atmosphere of truth, and without it truth is hard and cold and barren, as the Australian mountains are seen hundreds of miles away in the pitiless all-revealing air of that continent. Herbert Spencer has reminded us that our beliefs and actions are much more largely determined by our feelings than by our intellect; and South, over two hundred years ago, said wisely that "a man's life is the appendix to his heart." I am not therefore doing despite to intellectual research when I say that the voice which memory utters, sweet and sad in its tones, ought to be listened to by every intelligent person.

It is a voice of singular clearness. I remember once to have passed from a foreign graveyard, full of the moldering remains of humanity, to the deep vaults of the neighboring church, where were perfectly embalmed and preserved the bodies of men who a hundred years before had ministered to the spiritual wants of the country-side. And so when we descend into the depths where memory holds sway, quiet, remote from the outer air, we meet with, oh! so many objects dear to us long ago. Moreover, I believe it is just to say that the voice of memory is harmonious with truth. Doctor Guthrie, dying, asks for a bairn's hymn. The theology learned at a mother's knee is independent of

reason, perhaps, although not in antagonism with it; but it bears the test of after years wonderfully well. Was I wrong when I lingered in childhood spellbound under the music of that sweet story of old? Generally, I suspect when people throw off the faith they were born in, the best soil of their hearts is apt to cling to the roots. Jesus said, "Except ye become as little children ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." Was he deceiving us? Was he speaking in forgetfulness of the powers by which we reason and decide for ourselves? When his own memory floats up to us from the fields of Galilee—beneficent, compassionate, sympathetic—is it to be bidden down at the dictates of a passionless spirit of cold criticism? No, indeed. The truest and tenderest instincts of our hearts say, "Never!" The fathers who went before us had their conflicts as we have ours. Their mighty assurances were many of them born in great tribulation. Did the mother never doubt, or the teacher, or the pastor? We see the jewel flashing on the forefinger of all time, but not the hours of labor and of suffering which were spent before that jewel was brought to the light. Yet believe me such hours there were!

Again I ask, Is not this voice of memory, fragrant with the breath of prayer, musical with the words of Jesus, in accord with our own observation? Come, let us hearken to it, for amid the many

utterances of to-day this note also reaches us with vast and eloquent force.

3. Let us listen to the voice of personal experience. There has been a time in the life of every believer in Christ when his religion was the one real thing. He lived amid the unseen and the eternal. Such a life God himself had mapped out for the people of Judah now if they had been faithful to it. But with that very active power Egypt on the one side and that equally active power Assyria on the other, the things which were seen and temporal rose up like "walls of granite in a shadowy pass," and hid the sunshine and shut out the clear fresh air. The experience of many Christians is not unlike to theirs. The world with its cares, its claims, its laughter and its tears, its friendships and its rivalries, is "too much with us." Gradually the spiritual side of our life falls into disuse. We rarely climb the watchtower now to see the King in all his beauty. Such religion as we preserve is formal and mechanical, the tick of a clock wound up once a week, not the beating of a heart endued with the power of an endless life. But those early religious experiences, and these later and less frequent experiences have a voice. What do they testify? Under their influence you confess that you have had your happiest hours. It did not seem so incredible that you should some day be in heaven. And under them you did your

best work. When Robert Robinson in the dreary wilderness to which he had wandered in his denial of the divine nature of Jesus, heard a hymn of his own written long before when his heart was full of love for Christ, he burst into tears. He was not in error when he penned those lines. That work was better than he could do now! And you were truest to your own self. It was not a matter to be ashamed of—even though you might recall it from the side of an open grave, or from the bed of death, but you taught the ignorant, cheered the faint, spoke mighty words of faith to the doubter, and rang the clear note of conviction into some heart clouded with fear—no! that voice behind you tells you that when you have prayed, when your heart has burned within you under the sound of God's word, when you have worked for eternity—then you have been most of a man. Come then again, I cry, let us hearken to that voice, for it is worthy to be heard amid all the discord of the present age, a voice of mighty and wholesome power.

History, memory, personal experience, each one of these is a voice behind us. For a few moments we have dared to shut out the cries of to-day and to-morrow, and have listened to these tones from yesterday. Now, with our minds and our hearts full of these great inspiring utterances, let the curtain rise once more. Live in the present; face the future. But what has this three-fold

voice behind us done for us? I answer, in conclusion, it has done two things.

First. It has pointed with mighty assurance to the way in which we have to walk. On the right hand the mountain-side of unbelief, on the left hand the abyss of utter ignorance, our path lies straight before us. I am not claiming that we can see with absolute clearness. We cannot. But history, memory, and personal experience unite to declare that we make no mistake in standing in the old paths. Our fathers may not have been so learned as we, but they were possibly quite as wise. Certainly they were not fools. They had their deep thoughts as we have ours. The men who planned our laws, builded our constitution, planted our national life, did so very much in simple faith in God as their present helper, in Christ as their only Saviour, in the Holy Spirit as their guide, in the Bible as an authoritative voice from heaven, and in prayer as the daily and hourly communication with the skies. I am sure that history, memory, and experience are likely to be right when to me they say, "This is the way, walk ye in it."

Secondly. This "One clear voice of divers tones" bids us go on. "Walk ye in it." Progress not by forgetfulness of the past, but by reverence for it. To start from no yesterday is to reach no to-morrow. To ignore the daydawn is to ignore the sunset. We are on a road which leads clear out

of the ages which are past, and clear on to the ages which are yet to come. The scholar comes to his studies with all the wealth of bygone studies as his guide. The mightiest army in the world marches, it has been said, "with the swing of centuries of conquest." When Christ appeared the counsels which were from everlasting impelled him in his course to the cross, the sepulchre, the mount of ascension. So let our life flow on as the great rivers that move like God's eternity. We also go forward, and it is in the spirit of the apostle writing to the Hebrews when turning from the long processions of faithful men and women of whom the world was not worthy, he cries, "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

"Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left!"

XIII

OBEDIENCE THE SOLVENT OF DOUBT

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

—*John 7 : 17.*

XIII

OBEDIENCE THE SOLVENT OF DOUBT

THESE words enshrine one of those great principles of which the teachings of Jesus are so full. The principle in this instance is one of perpetual importance and was never needed more than it is now. As we read the text in our version, however, we fail to get this principle clearly before our minds, and indeed we may even mistake it altogether. The Revised version reads: "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from myself." Comparing this with the words as we have them in our text, you will see how important is the difference. "If any man will do God's will" calls only for an external obedience. From inferior motives, from fear, from formalism, from fashion, men will perform the will of God. Balaam did when he blessed Israel, though his base heart would rather have cursed them. But this is not what Christ said. No. "If any man willeth to do God's will." Here we are led into the man's mind and soul. His obedience is not "from the teeth outward." His whole will is set to do the will of

his Father in heaven. This is what Jesus taught here. When any man is fully and heartily resolved to do God's will, then he shall hold in his possession the one sure test by which to decide on the value or worthlessness of religious teaching.

The text reminds us of the abiding perplexity about Jesus of Nazareth. He was teaching in Jerusalem. By common consent, as the last verses in this very chapter say, "Never man spake like this man." Whence then, it was asked, came his spiritual insight? "How knoweth this man learning?" He owed nothing to the schools. He was self-taught. He had never crossed the threshold of any college. He had not sat at the feet of any Gamaliel. This calm, dogmatic tone of his, finding its voice in his words "I say unto you," might be the presumption of sheer ignorance, but it might be the prerogative of divine light. Did that light die out with the last of the prophets? Or was this the star foretold so long ago, and was Simeon right when he called Jesus "A light to lighten the Gentiles"?

Our Lord answered this conflict of opinion: "My teaching," he said, "is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know about this teaching whether it be of God or of myself." "Fear God. Keep his commandments from the heart, then come with your illumined judgments to these words of mine." The principle

of our text, then, is this: Obedience the solvent of doubt. Put into a very familiar proverb we can say, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge."

At this time we will examine for a while this will that holds the key to the knowledge of true religion. "If any man willeth to do his will." I remark that it has two conspicuous characteristics, intelligent submission and active obedience.

1. Intelligent submission is the first of these. "If any man willeth to do his will." What is involved here?

Plainly, in the first instance, a divine will. "His will." This universe, this world, this society in which we live, we ourselves, are ruled by law. What is this law? I answer: It is God's will. Until we discover this our life, and the life of all time, is like the alphabet flung down on the floor in no sort of order. When we do discover it, it is like these letters combined to form the Decalogue. I should say that the supreme moment in any man's existence comes not when he sights a new continent; opens a fresh avenue to fortune; stands, the artist, before his masterpiece; wins, the politician, the proudest place—no, but when he lays his finger, tremulous with the joy of discovery, thrilling with the gladness of satisfaction, upon this one truth: God has a will about me—about me in reference to the business, to the purpose, to the

study, to anything that is coming within the range of my life.

Then, intelligent submission implies further that this divine will we can discover. Christ never demanded, as some of his followers since have demanded, blind, unreasoning acquiescence. He never said, as some of his followers since have said, Believe, do not think, do not search, only believe and obey. At this very time he appeals to the reading of these Jews. He says, "Did not Moses give you the law?" If God had demanded only blind submission he would not have created us with minds. It needs no mind to know that fire burns or that water drowns. Let the law, like some tall granite cliff, be reared in my path; I dare it and am dashed to atoms on its pitiless front. If God had demanded blind submission he would not have given us this Bible. This is the revelation of his working in the past. It needs to be read intelligently. Then the jeweled finger of the centuries gives point to the present and emphasizes the duty of to-day by means of the history of yesterday. If God had demanded only blind submission he would not have appointed prayer. There is no path of approach to a tyrant's throne. Even the judge sits on the bench remote in the majesty of the law. But prayer opens the door of heaven at the touch of a child's finger and that door swings to the plea of God's fatherhood. "After this

manner pray ye, Our Father." If God had demanded only blind submission he would never have spoken to us in the Spirit. "Love me; keep my commandments," says Jesus, and the Spirit of truth shall come. "He shall teach you all things."

This mind of yours, this Bible, this privilege of prayer, this legacy of the Holy Spirit, all declare that God's will can be discovered. It is no shrouded mystery. It is no silent enigma. It comes to us with open face, with lips musical with mercy, saying, "Seek, and ye shall find."

What more is implied besides a divine will which we can discover? I answer: A divine will to which we can submit. Read the correct reading of our text, "If any man willeth to do his will." The battle of the will is fought out here. We are in this world, where every natural force is made to yield to man's will. Man's will digs the coal and captures the lightning and controls the stream. In the face of this imperious will there is no force in nature which dares say, "I won't" if man says "You shall." Now, the conflict is almost inevitable between our will, so accustomed to rule, and this yet higher will, the will of God. In few words it seems that the struggle resolves itself into this: Shall we bend the divine will to ours, or shall we bend our will to the divine? The heathen uses his idol to enforce his own will. If it fails to do so he burns it or casts it into the gutter. And some

Christians use prayer in the same way. They desire to bend the will of God until it conforms to theirs. Jesus here, and always indeed, insists that our will must be submited heartily and intelligently to the will of God. The old saying ran, "The voice of the people is the voice of God." So far do we believe this to be true that when the nation has spoken its voice at the polls we all submit. No single will, no group of wills dares rebel. What is only partially true in this illustration is absolutely true in the region of God's direct action. He has a will. I can find out what it is; I can submit to it.

You may notice that in all I have been saying I have given the widest possible interpretation to this word "will" as applied to man. "What," it may be asked, "if I intellectually acquiesce in this doctrine of the imperial authority of God's will, shall I hold the test of truth in my hand?" Oh, no! "Well, then," it may be further asked, "if my feelings agree that God shall be supreme, though my mind is scornful, rebellious, shall truth come to me then?" Again I answer, "No." The whole man is what I understand by the will. There are natures which are like the oak whose iron trunk never bends, though the branches sway in the tempest. There are other natures like that oak fallen, its trunk prostrate in the dust, but its leaves blowing yet in very willfulness of life. The stubborn will

with the swaying emotions—that is not man. The conquered will but the rebellious emotions—that is not man. Join the two. It is false to say that in religion the intellect alone counts. Your mind cannot use truth unless your heart has felt it. The path to all truth lies through the heart. It is equally false to affirm that character alone counts, that a man's judgment and opinions as to truth may be all wrong, and it matters not so long as the heart is in the right place. The secret of right living is right thinking. The will of which Jesus here spoke was alike the clear mind and the glowing heart. A man should aim, like John the Baptist, to be a burning and a shining light. When Jesus spoke thus, was he not speaking from his own experience? What did he learn in the wilderness? It was his will to do God's will as it was written in Scripture. That gave him the touchstone of truth before which the words of the tempter shriveled up into the black and poisonous lies that they were. What did he mean but this when he said, "My judgment is just because I seek not mine own will but the will of him that sent me"? In the garden of Gethsemane it was this mighty principle that conquered: "Nevertheless, Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt." We are saved, we are redeemed, we are heirs of glory because, in the complete humiliation of his earthly life, our Lord's will was to do the will of his Father.

2. The second condition on which we can obtain religious knowledge is active obedience. "If any man's will be to do God's will."

It is a very familiar truth which is here enforced. Emerson has put it well when he says, "There is much that a man must act as life before it can be apprehended as truth." Saul's armor is not good to David because he has not proved it. There is a great deal of doubt which arises from doing what the Jews were doing here. They confined knowledge to the schools. Schools are places for asking questions, for forming theories, for building up systems. No man ever learned to be an architect who had not climbed the building as it grew. No man ever learned to be a sailor who had not put to sea and driven his vessel through the wild waves and blustering storms. Even John the Baptist doubts when he is shut off from the active life in the prison cell. Not even the Spirit of God brooding on the face of the waters can create a world. God must speak and bid the light appear. Doubts are the natural results of a mind confined to the schools. Every college must have doors that swing outward to let the student go forth and try his truth in the world of action. The doctor is called to see a patient troubled with some form of hypochondria. How close the room is; and see, the shutters are tightly fastened. What is the cure? Fresh air, light. That is the cure for a good deal of doubt.

I claim that it is a sin to brand every doubter as though he were a child of the devil. Paul was a heretic in the estimation of the majority, and it was for so-called heresy that Christ was crucified. But only ask this question, "Is it your will to do God's will?" Where does this lead? Where the doctor leads his despondent patient, out into the world of action. Will you look at Christianity in motion? Then you shall know whether it is of God or only of man.

Think, for example, of the initial truth in the life of the soul—conversion. It cannot be explained. It is like birth, says Jesus; it is like the wind. But what is it? No one was ever converted who paused until that question was answered. But let any one say, My will is to do God's will in this matter—then he is converted. It is no more he that liveth, but Christ liveth in him. His life, then, he lives by the faith of the Son of God.

Or think of the substitution of Christ, dying the just for us the unjust to bring us to God. I do not say that it is unnatural, for there are many proofs ready to my hand that it falls in with a vast, far-reaching law—but I do say that such analogies help us very little. That cross with his Son upon it lifted up to draw all men unto him is God's will. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." Let any one say, "My will is to do God's will in this

great miracle of divine love," then for him Christ has died. He believes and he shall never perish.

Or think of Christian discipleship. "Whosoever will," whosoever has a will, that is, "to come after me." What is this discipleship? Try it. On the first opportunity deny self when self comes into conflict with God. Take up the first cross that lies in your path. Now see those footprints of Jesus, and one by one tread in those footprints henceforth. Follow him. Then you shall know what this doctrine of discipleship is.

So I might go on from one point to another until with rapt and eager eye we pause before the gates of heaven. What is it? "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him."

Doing God's will, in no servile or grudging temper, but in the spirit of Him who said, "I delight to do thy will, O God," we shall know of every teaching, whence it comes, and whose the image and superscription that it bears.

Our text, then, promises no light to the dreamer, the theorist. It demands in every case action. Do God's will as to conversion, as to accepting Christ, as to discipleship. Then you shall know; for here as elsewhere the golden words of Pascal apply: "The things of man must be known in order to be loved; the things of God must be loved in order to be known." We began by saying that the

principle here laid down is for all time. It is for all ages and generations—"If any man." I conclude, then, with the application to ourselves.

Here is the man beginning to think for himself. He finds his mind. It is not the mind of his masters, but it is that fresh, fearless personal possession —his own mind. Very likely in the joy of this discovery—which sometimes comes to us late, at other times early in life, and in matters of religion is too often the last discovered faculty—he tries to square revelation to his mind. He is himself the final voice. It is as if a locomotive should resolve to make the iron road follow its wild and wayward course. But let the man bend before the divine will. Let him even as he drives into the mists dare to sing, "Lead, kindly Light." What then? Then shall he know of Christ's teaching whether it be of God or whether he spake of himself. I have seen too much, I have felt too much of this painful and aching doubt to speak harsh words of condemnation. Christ never spoke them. He claimed only the submissive will, the active obedience, and then he had no fears for that mind. A man never put God at the helm only to make shipwreck.

But here is another man waking up to find a life, and that life his own. How many a young man discovers himself when for the first time he goes to the polls to vote. Now he is a man! He reaches back and touches the hand of the father of his

country. He is in line with him, and he keeps the line for generations yet unborn in the golden future of this great land. But so is he finding all his powers. Not only the powers political, but those that are social and deal with the home and the family, and those that are commercial and deal with the business and the work. He may try—thousands do—to force his religion to play the courtier or the sycophant to his own life. Religion has sung its *Te Deum* when tyrants were crowned. Religion has taken its offerings from hands stained with blood or befouled with dishonesty. The end of that course is death. Religion cannot breathe as a slave. Like John the Baptist it loves liberty, and must perish if above its head Herodias dances and Herod drinks. But now reverse this process. Take God as the supreme will of your life. Carry his gospel into your existence, as citizens, as householders, as husband, lover, friend; fear not to let its light shine in the "common round and trivial task." Then shall you know how true are these great words of the Apostle Paul, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come." "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus . . . make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

XIV

PURE AND UNDEFILED RELIGION

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

—*James 1 : 27.*

XIV

PURE AND UNDEFILED RELIGION

The Epistle of James is unlike all other writings in the New Testament, and this verse is unlike all other verses in the Epistle of James. Of them all it is the one which remains in our memories. The apostle's somewhat formal style of writing suddenly breaks off, and as through a rent in the rocky shore, reveals a glimpse of blue sea indescribably beautiful.

It is a mistake, I believe, to say that we have here a definition of what religion is which is intended to satisfy the demands of precise thought. Simply this is a description of the utter unlikeness of true religion to the religion of the man who seeming to be religious yet "bridles not his tongue." Such a religion, the apostle says, "is vain," for "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this."

The word which is here employed for "religion" is almost peculiar to James. And it is highly characteristic of him. It does not mean the root, source, or principle of religion, but only what we should perhaps call religious services. A heathen rather than a Christian word, in one aspect of it

it means superstition, in another ritual. Now James was the Hebrew of the Hebrews among the prominent disciples of Jesus. He was a devoted adherent of the law, his mind was steeped in the spirit of the old prophets, and tradition says that he dwelt continually in the courts of the temple at Jerusalem. So he speaks here of the formalist in the church of Christ, who has no control over that tongue which James himself brands as "a fire," "a world of iniquity," "an unruly member of evil, full of deadly poison." And of that man's religious service he says that it is vain.

The danger with all of us is that we take partial views of what religion is. We dwell only on one side of the mountain, and by and by we forget that it has any other side. We sun ourselves on its southern slopes, or brace ourselves to fresh endeavor on its northern exposure, and so our life becomes partial and ill-balanced, instead of being complete and well-rounded. One man says, Religion is what I profess: it is creed. Another says, Religion is what I do: it is conduct. A third says, Religion is what I am: it is character. But in our text James, speaking only of the whole religious service of a truly devout Christian life, says, It is not one of these alone, nor two. It is all three. Creed, conduct, character, all are included in "pure religion and undefiled." Those three points our verse contains. Let us think upon them now.

1. Here is religion in the presence of God, my faith. We have already glanced at the case which the apostle had in mind, and what called out these words. James claims that the religion of the formalist be carried up and tested before the highest tribunal. The supreme Arbiter he sees there alike in the grandeur and the graciousness of his nature.

He is first "our God." The man who now stands before him not only deceives others, but worse far he deceives himself. In the true rendering of the previous verse, "He thinketh himself to be religious." He is like one who has seen only the outer courts of the temple, with the dwellings of the priests. What if he pass within? What if he see the great altar smoking with its sacrifices? What if he be present when the high priest enters hushed and awe-struck into the holiest of all? Each step nearer to the heart of the great sanctuary fills his soul as never before with the tremendous holiness of religion. Yesterday he was only like an Israelite camping at the foot of Sinai. To-day he is like Moses on the mountain height, seeing the very face of the Almighty. James knew what it was to penetrate into "the secret place of the Most High." Stories about him which there seems no reason to question, tell us that he was called "the Just." He was holy from his birth, and like John the Baptist abstemious and ascetic. Alone he used to go into the temple, and there he was commonly found

upon his knees in prayer, so that as the simple comparison runs, those knees grew dry and thick like a camel's from his so constantly bending them on the hard marble floor before God. In communion with the true God all things are seen in their reality. And the false, the shallow, the merely external, shrivel up and wither away. A religious service which is vain cannot stand in the presence of the Lord.

But, further, this supreme Arbiter before whom our religion is to be tested, is also "our Father." We have said that the writer of these words was full of the spirit of the old prophets. Now one of the great truths upon which they insisted was the fatherhood of God; his care for his children, his love for them. Their conflicts with the priests raged around this truth. Both agreed that pure religion would manifest itself openly; but the first claimed that this manifestation would be ritualistic, the prophet that it would be moral. He heaps scorn upon a religion which failed to relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, and plead for the widow. He pictured God himself as appealing against the burnt offerings and the vain oblations, and the spreading forth of hands, and making many prayers. He heard the voice of God saying, "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free? . . Is it not to deal thy

bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?"

Are these words three thousand years old, or were they spoken yesterday? My brother, the supreme Arbiter is ever the same. Our religious service must be carried into the fierce light of divine reality, and measured by the beating of the heart of infinite pity. Is it pure then? There is it undefiled? This is the first answer furnished us by our text to the question—What is religion?

2. We see here religion in its effect upon conduct. It is this, "To visit." This is the side of religion which confronts the world in which we live. We may call it compassion, or beneficence, or charity; but words are poor to do it justice. Three of its pictures are suggested here:

First. True religion is active. "To visit." The peril with all organized charity is that it does its work by proxy. It subscribes, it sends missionaries, it pays evangelists, it supports pastors. This is surely out of sympathy with the spirit of the gospel. The great truth about God's love was that it came itself to our world, incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ. And when our Lord, in his parable of the last judgment, describes the test which will be applied to us all, what is it? I was an hungered, I was thirsty, I was a stranger, I was

naked, I was sick, I was in prison. And then—what didst thou do?

The force of this appears if we notice, further, that this true religion is unselfish. "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction." Probably the apostle had in his mind the fatherhood of God to which he had just alluded. God was "the Father of the fatherless." Already in the church, although it was not many years old, human sorrow had asserted itself. There were graves in the cemetery where breaking hearts had buried their dead out of their sight. The path which Jesus trod at Bethany, the tears which there Jesus wept, the last enemy which Jesus faced—their Christian faith had not delivered the believers from these. The earliest appeal to the benevolence of the church was on behalf of the widow. And in her loneliness, with the little children clinging to her, she has been ever since the embodiment of the Mother of Sorrows. James bids the strong and the happy and the well-to-do to turn aside and tread the cypress-lined road where that figure waits in the great solitude and anguish of her grief. Visit, not by proxy, but personally, human misery.

And why? Because true religion is not only active and unselfish, but it is also sympathetic. There is something which money cannot do, but which the throbbing heart of compassion can. The apostle does not narrow the office of religion

to gifts, however worthy. He bids us do what friends and neighbors did in Bethany when Mary and Martha lost their brother Lazarus. They came to them. Sympathy does not mean a hand full of gold, nor lips fluent with cheap condolence. Often it is poor in worldly goods; often it has no words to utter. But it comes because it has trodden that path itself. Sympathy, remember, is not feeling *for* another, it is much more than that—it is feeling *with* another. We do not therefore confine the thought of the text to the widow and the fatherless in their affliction. The root of the trouble which separates nation from nation, class from class, is lack of sympathy. The rich are heartless because they do not know what it is to be poor. The strong are pitiless because they do know what it is to be weak. How little I know of the dreadful force of circumstances which landed this man in the jail; drove that poor drifting wreck, once a sweet, pure child, to shame; and buried that boy of promise in a drunkard's grave. Oh, the deep truth in the inscription in the Jewish graveyard over some flagrant sinner—"Thou knowest." Yes, God knows. Let us try to know also.

This sympathy was the secret of Christ's power when he was here. He was poor, he was homeless, he was despised and rejected of men. But yet he visited the fatherless and the widow in their affliction. It was this sense of what he had been,

and could now be no longer, which quenched the light, and took the sweetness from the air, when he lay in the sepulchre. A friend of Tennyson, walking with him in his garden said, "What do you think of Christ?" The poet remained silent awhile, and then he answered, "Look, here is a flower. What the sun is to this flower, Christ is to me." Brethren, our religion should be light and warmth and life itself to the dark, chill, desolate world around us. Believe me,

> 'Tis worth a wise man's best of life,
> 'Tis worth a thousand years of strife,
> If thou canst lessen but by one
> The countless ills beneath the sun.

3. We see here religion in its influence over character. "To keep himself." We shall do an injustice to the apostle's thought, if we take the word "world" as meaning only what leads us astray. I suppose that it stands in the thought of James for the present state of things. To it Paul alludes when he says of Demas that he has forsaken him having loved this present world. John sums up all that is in the world, as "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." James himself bids us remember that the friendship of the world is enmity with God, and that whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. It is not, then, only what is distinctly evil.

Flood this world with God; and the flesh, the eyes, the life, would all be glorified and reclaimed. The danger in them now is that they are without God. So we are brought face to face with the problem which has never ceased to press upon thoughtful men for solution. This life that now is—its interests, its ambitions, its employments—how shall I treat it? How can we harmonize ourselves with our environments? There are three answers.

First. Seek the world. Why should a man quarrel with fate? Is he not endowed with passions and appetites and tastes? Does not the tide sweep him forward? Why not yield in the house of Potiphar rather than moulder in an Egyptian prison? Why not enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season rather than tend sheep on Sinai?

Then the second answer is: Shun the world. The monastery slumbers in the valley, the cell lies hidden in the mountain-side; far away let the wild world laugh and sing and dance; come thou apart and in some solitude arched over by the deep blue sky, dwell "with thy weakness and thy God."

Neither of these answers is the answer of James. He says, "Keep unspotted from the world." The words are few, but how full of teaching. Here is the danger. It is not that you will be necessarily immersed in the world. Christian people are not often that. But when John Bunyan in his prison laid his head on the head of his little blind

daughter and spoke of the rough winds which must blow upon her whom he loved so dearly that he could not bear that one chill breath should touch her, he pictured the trouble with us, "Spotted with the world." This is what life does. It makes us "sadly wise." Why should Isaac climbing the hill so bravely learn that he himself was to be the sacrifice? Why should infancy lose its dimpled sweetness, girlhood its chaste purity, boyhood its frank fearlessness? Why must the leaf decay and the peach be robbed of its bloom? "Unspotted from the world." How, like the sunbeam, can we pass through pollution unspotted?

James does much more than raise the question. He answers it. "Keep yourself," he says, using a strong word which suggests not a virulent wrench by which you unhand temptation and deliver yourself once for all, but rather a daily and hourly vigilance. How? That he has already told us. By communion with God; and by compassion for God's creatures. On the divine side, let religion dwell in constant fellowship with the Father. On the human side, let religion visit the fatherless and the widow. Keep your soul pure. Keep your heart tender. It is to be noticed that he refuses to separate them. They are only different aspects of one and the same life. No man will be truly benevolent unless he live near to Christ. No man can live near to Christ without benevolence.

Now this is true religious service. We return to the thought with which we commenced. It is not a theological definition, but it is a portrait, which rises from these few masterly touches, of a really religious life. It lives as ever in "the great Taskmaster's eye." It gives as though in each sufferer it saw the Man of Sorrows; and in each wanderer Him who had not where to lay his head. It guards itself against spot and blemish with the immortal principle of Joseph, "I cannot do this great wickedness and sin against God."

Time does not affect this picture. It has always represented religion. To this day it does so. This life of beautiful charity is not religion, but it is, as Coleridge says, "its service and ceremonial." The scheme of grace and truth by Jesus Christ "has light for its garment; its very robe is righteousness." Beneath the robe, behold the heart at peace with God by Jesus Christ our Lord.

I go further. Did I say that time worked no changes in this fair picture? We lift it into the light of eternity, and say that even forever it will remain the same. Creed, conduct, character—what I believe, what I do, what I am—these shall continue to make for me the religious service of heaven itself. "The throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face and his name shall be in their foreheads."

XV

BREAD CAST UPON THE WATERS

Cast thy bread upon the waters ; for thou shalt find it after many days.

—*Ecclesiastes* 11 : 1.

XV

BREAD CAST UPON THE WATERS

Of the childhood of Solomon little is told us; but we are warranted in concluding that his schooling was very largely gathered from the natural world. "He spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall; he spake also of beasts and of fowls, and of creeping things and of fishes." "My book," he could say, alike in early boyhood and in later years, "is the whole creation, lying open before me; wherein I can read, wheresoever I please, the word of God." To this education, I suppose, we owe it that his writings are so full of subtle analogies between the world of nature and the world of spirit. His father David had all the poet's delight in the beautiful; to him "the stars sang, and the sea"; for him the forest trees roared in the blast and the everlasting hills towered heavenward in perpetual majesty. "O Lord," he would cry, "how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches." Solomon was more of the philosopher than of the poet. Life to him was an enigma and

a mystery. It was a riddle to be guessed at, it was a problem to be solved. So he went beneath the surface on which the eye of his father rested with satisfied delight, and looked down into the heart of things.

From this world of nature our text is taken ; and I have selected it in order to study with you some of the great laws which hold us in their grasp still, and in obedience to which our Christian life and practice must be pursued.

1. The first of these, as we readily perceive, is The Law of Sowing and Reaping.

No better illustration can be found in Scripture than we have here of the benefit which has accrued to us through books of travel in the right understanding of many perplexing passages. The old commentator saw in these words a command to the husbandman to sow his seed on the face of the waters, "to sow the foaming deep," as one of them says, without any hope of a harvest ; and from this the lesson was drawn that we must do good although our good deeds should be manifestly thrown away. But an acquaintance with Eastern customs has shed new light upon these words, so that now we are no longer forced to believe that the Bible encouraged such a reckless and unwarranted waste either of seed corn or benevolence. The image is no doubt taken from the method of sowing pursued in countries which are fertilized by irrigation. On

the Nile one may still see the boat floating on the overflowing waters, in which the sowers stand, flinging broadcast the seed, which will sink down and, when the flood subsides, will germinate in the rich alluvial soil beneath. "Cast thy bread-corn," said Solomon, "upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days."

There are dark passages in this book of Ecclesiastes, in which the writer seems to have seen no better or wiser law in the earth than blind chance. But what is chance? You will have noticed, I have no doubt, that the more ignorant and thoughtless a person is, the more he attributes what happens to luck, good or bad, to accident, and to chance. You speak to an untutored savage—I do not necessarily mean a painted Indian or a Zulu, but possibly one who will exercise his privileges at the poll next week—and chance appears to be his only explanation of the mysteries of life. You turn from him to the man of science and he assures you that there is no such a thing as chance. What ignorance calls chance, knowledge declares to be simply law in some of its less common and familiar workings. See how Solomon touches on this great truth in this very chapter: "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." What does he mean here? What but

that all sowing of seed produces some result. That seed which filters through the overflowing waters and sinks into the soil may live, or it may die. Living it shall be found in the green blade; dying it shall be found in a richer vegetation. In either case "thou shalt find it after many days." Now here is a law which everyday, with increased knowledge and ampler experience, is showing us to be universal. Every cause produces some consequence. Nothing is lost. The ripple on the lake, made by the swirl of a passing steamer, will go on forever. The disturbance of the atmosphere caused by a shotgun fired, will never cease while the world lasts. What then is failure? When the great revelation flashes upon us, and we see no longer through a glass darkly, I believe we shall discover that nothing has failed and become as though it never had been. The world grows rich not alone by the springing blade, but equally by the roving seed that only gives its little life to make the soil more fertile. Truth progresses by failure. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. Many a father has been brought from darkness to light, bending over his little child's grave. "That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die." "I," said Christ, speaking of his cross, "if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

2. The second law which is touched upon here, is the Law of Profit and Loss.

As you may have remarked already, I am rendering the sentence, "Cast thy bread-corn upon the waters," because that is, beyond question, the true meaning of the verse. There is, you will see, this natural division of our substance; so much to spend and so much to lay by. Here is corn that we must live on; here is corn that we must save to sow. The first is bread-corn, the second is seed-corn. Now what does Solomon counsel? Take, he says, your present livelihood and spend it on the future. What if, in your resolve to live and to work for eternity, you have less pleasure to-day; what if you do not make quite so much money; what if you sacrifice present gratifications—you shall find the reward from this hereafter. Time is the interest. Eternity is the principal. Why throw away your principal in time? In the days of Queen Elizabeth, from many a little busy seaport in the old country, the merchant sent out what was called his "venture." He purchased and stocked his ship, paid his crew and commander, put all that he had into the speculation; and then, one day, the sailors marched from the church where solemn service had been held, to the shore, and so launched out into the deep. That merchant was a poorer man for his experiment. He lived hardly. He clothed his family in rough homespun. But, after a lapse of months, perhaps years, one morning he heard the guns, the shouts of the sailors,

the voices of eager wives and children ; and, with all her sails set and her flags flying, the good ship came home again—and he was the richest man in the town. Brethren, it is a wide ocean, and "a land that is very far off" lies beyond it. But "lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven." Live for the unseen and eternal ! Let the flush of the invisible daydawn light up your faces, and in your eyes let celestial harvests gleam. I know what it will cost. I know what men will say. When Palissy the potter brought the poor furniture of his cottage and thrust it all into the furnace to keep the fire up in which his pottery was baking ; and when he knelt in the fierce heat, a beggar, was his wife wrong to stand, with the hunger-bitten, ragged children round her, and charge him with madness and with cruelty ? But he looked with the eye of faith into the flames, and he saw the forms that were rare, the colors that were permanent, the rich and the beautiful in his workmanship ; and when, with nothing else in all the wide world, he drew these perfect vessels forth in triumph he was for all time the prince peerless in his art. So men have taken even themselves—"I count not my life dear unto me," the apostle cried, "so that I may win Christ and be found in him." We must give to God of our bread-corn. This time which you cannot well spare ; this money which you had destined for some less lasting venture ; this faculty

which the world would fain use in present service —you must give him all. Cast thy very bread, cast thy very self, upon the soil of eternity—"thou shalt find it after many days."

3. The third law illustrated here, is The Law of Greater and Less.

I cannot wonder that we are overwhelmed sometimes with the feeling that we must reap at once. But, dear brethren, we only need learn to sow well. When our Lord was preparing to leave this world, there was one to whom he said, "That which thou doest, do quickly"; but that one was Judas. There were eleven to whom he said, rather, "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high"; these eleven were the hope of Christendom. Across everything which has the sentence of death in itself, the words spoken to Judas may be written. Across everything which throbs with "the power of an endless life" we may rather write that other and nobler sentence. In the world of politics, how much depends upon action this week. A fortnight hence, and all human eloquence, wisdom, pleasuring, will be like the Israelitish manna when it had been kept too long. But when a man starts from this center—"My life"—and works outward, each circle, wider than the last, is also slower in its response to action. He must breathe every moment, or he dies. He must eat every few hours, or he starves. He must turn

over his memory every year or two, or he loses. He must study in youth, think in early manhood, act in his prime, or his life is wasted. Now we touch on the widest present world circle, the common weal. He must vote, he must decide now, for influences which shall tell on his country when he has been gathered to his fathers. Ah, but beyond that circle I hear the lapping waves of another—it is measureless. It is infinite. There he must cast his bread and wait many, many days. Yes "many days," even in that higher arithmetic which counts a thousand years as one day, and one day as a thousand years.

The most high God cast the bread-corn of redemption on the waters at the gate of Eden, in the promise of a Saviour. Four thousand years he waited, until the voice of the Saviour cried on Calvary, "It is finished!" Then he found it again.

This finding of the seed which is sown in time will, I suppose, constitute our eternity. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." But in reference to the immortality of our work, there are two conflicting theories.

(1) The first is that which meets with favor from a handful of visionaries, who say: The only immortality we recognize is not immortality of the individual, but immortality of his influence. Be virtuous, be generous, be pure, and you will live again in an increase, in the future, of the virtue, the

generosity, and the purity of the race. Washington is immortal in the republic; Alfred of England is immortal in law; Mozart lives forever in strains of music which but for him would never have been heard. Now, if the man be inferior to his work there might be reason in this. But because he is not, because the man is greater than his work, and I am more than virtue or benevolence or purity which I may display, therefore I demand an immortality for myself and not for my qualities alone.

(2) The second conception of immortality is the Christian. The man is immortal in and with his life-work. Resurrection shall be the coming forth of each soul in just that form which each soul has been preparing for itself in time. But when is this resurrection? It is now; it is hereafter; it is always. A good man is being even now "clothed upon with his body which is from heaven." What is death to him who is thus sowing for eternity? It has no existence! He may "find" now, or a year hence, or a thousand years from this time. Carey, in India; Moffat, in Africa; Judson, in Burma, waited many a long year before they made a single convert. But now every dusky heathen in these lands brought to Christ is part of this immortality. It is hard, God alone knows how hard, to wait, to preach and to pray, and to labor for the salvation of souls, and in the evening to cry, "Who

hath believed our report." But the end shall crown the work. Let the preacher live a myriad years, and at length, in some far distant court of heaven, find one soul that shall cry, "You led me to Christ"—in that blissful moment, he shall see that he had not lived in vain.

4. The last law to which this verse points, is that of Progress through Change.

"Thou shalt find it——" What? Not the seed indeed, but the growth that has sprung from it. Christ once preached a sermon on the well-side of Samaria to a poor woman. Years passed, and Philip the evangelist happened to travel that way. To his delight his preaching was welcome. "The people with one accord listened." "And there was great joy in that city." We are left to infer that this quickness to hear, and this willingness to listen, were the results of Christ's memorable sermon preached so long before. I care not to meet their poor, imperfect services, their faltering prayers, this half-enlightened teaching, this preaching which is all unworthy alike of the immortal souls that hear it, and of the stupendous theme which it sets forth. But these are only the dry outer husk which the seed breaks through and casts off. We shall meet in heaven not the seed but the harvest! Shall not heaven be a succession of surprises and of joy? We sowed "not that body that shall be, but bare grain"—poor prayers, faulty examples, stammering

appeals. But see! "God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body."

Cast thy bread-corn on the waters. The seed shall sink through these ebbing and flowing waves of time. They shall fall, divinely guided, into the rich soil of eternity which lies everywhere beneath. When the waters of this present life shall be drained off, when there shall "be no more sea," then in that discovery of the unseen and eternal, we "shall find it."

> And with the morn those angel faces smile
> Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.

XVI

THE SENTINEL PEACE

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

—*Philippians 4 : 7.*

XVI

THE SENTINEL PEACE

To us these words are both more and less than they were to Paul when he wrote them. They are more, because about them has crystallized the rich and varied experience of so many centuries. They reach us with the added emphasis of a multitude of voices setting to their seal that Paul was right and that this great utterance of his is true. But, on the other hand, they are less to us than they were to him, inasmuch as they are so intimately connected with his own life and with circumstances that we very imperfectly recover. A painter who has put on canvas some incident suggested in his own home—the face of his child, the glow of his fireside—has been known to grudge parting with his picture. It was so much more to him than it ever could be to the purchaser. So is it here. Paul was a prisoner in Rome, very much alone, treated with scant courtesy (it would seem) by the brethren in the imperial capital whom he had so earnestly longed to see. Then to him came Epaphroditus, from the church at Philippi, bringing to the apostle assistance in his poverty, and, what was

more welcome yet, kind words and loving greetings, the assurance that he was constantly in the hearts and prayers of his friends in the far-off city. This was a bright and beautiful contrast to the disquiet and disappointment of his life in Rome, and it suggested, we may suppose, the thought of our text. "The peace of God" was the pearl to purchase which he had parted with everything besides, and here in the Roman prison he drew it forth and drank in its calm, restful beauty. Following his example, and as though we were his companions in the same bonds of the gospel, we will inquire into this peace of God which passes all understanding. The apostle's words will sufficiently reveal to us the hidden lustre of the jewel.

1. Notice, then, as the first thought, that it is the peace of God, marked off and enthroned apart by this distinction. So accustomed have we grown to hear the expression that it needs an effort of the mind to arrest it and define just what it means. For one thing, it is the peace of God inasmuch as peace is one of the divine attributes. A little later Paul calls him "the God of peace." So that when he gives us this he really gives us himself. For another thing, you may remember that peace is his peculiar delight. The opening and closing chapters in the Bible illustrate this. On the seventh day, with a completed creation, God rested from all his work, and it was not the day that first saw light or verdure

or human life, but only this day that he hallowed. The revelation of heaven at the last is a revelation of unbroken, tranquil purity. The peace of God means, further, that it is from him that peace comes. You must start from his throne, the fount and source of peace, if you mean to follow the stream as it flows down through the ages. The African explorer, beginning at the coast and tracing the great river upward, soon lost the main stream in the tributaries of it, which looked so broad and so deep that he was beguiled into following them. All peace worthy the name is from God, but to know how deep and how wide and how mighty the river is you must begin with God himself. Other streams are but rivulets in comparison. Before long they are lost in the forest or the marsh. But the peace which, in the great words of Isaiah, is "a place of broad rivers and streams," springs from the very feet of "the glorious Lord" himself.

And once more, as peace is God's attribute and his delight and owns in him its only true source, so is it in the believer as a necessary consequence of God's own indwelling. Where God is there must be this peace. The great painter leaves his autograph, as it were, in the slightest touches on his canvas as truly as he does in the more important strokes of his brush, and so the calm in the soul, though sometimes very brief and apparently accidental, is divine. It is God's crowning blessing. What was

the salutation with the Jews as they met is our benediction, "The peace of God!"

2. Notice, secondly, that this peace is here pictured as passing all understanding. There seems to be no sufficient reason for reading into these words any other meaning than the one which they plainly convey on their face. Paul may have had in his thought the obvious truth that God's peace passes all other peace, that there is none comparable to it. But he meant much more. He meant that this blessing was one which was not only incomparable but also inconceivable.

Upon this I would remark at once that because it passes our understanding God's peace is not therefore irrational. A thing may be superhuman without being supernatural. A thing may be both superhuman and supernatural without being irreconcilable either with humanity or with nature. These two words, God's peace, like great folding doors flung wide open, let us into a region which of necessity we are impotent to understand. What do I really know either of God or of peace? Theology, of all sciences, is the one that reminds us of a child playing with diamonds, incapable as yet of estimating the wealth that lies at the heart of each lustrous stone. But how can it be otherwise? Would you be willing for your mind, or indeed for the loftiest mind in the universe, to be made the absolute measure and the final limit of truth?

Shall even the telescope of the greatest power command us to believe that there are no stars beyond its grasp and range? And when we rise from the investigation of the material and turn our thought to the spiritual world shall any age claim the last word and write "*finis*" to the right or to the ability of the mind to discover fresh truth? Much more irrational, however, than even this would be the assertion that great mysteries such as these two, which are linked together in the word "God" and the word "peace," must not have heights which no human mind can scale and depths which no human mind can fathom. When John Robinson launched the Pilgrim Fathers on their venturesome voyage to the New World with the assurance that there was yet much fresh light to break forth from God's word, by those words he bade them set sail on another ocean as much broader and nobler than the Atlantic as he and his heroic companions were broader and nobler than their malignant English persecutors.

The reverse of what Paul here says would be irrational indeed. Of all men he would be the last to consent to limit the truth of God by the mind of his creature. To his fervid faith there was a margin of dazzling splendor to every subject, bright through excess of glory. The love of Christ passeth knowledge. Christ himself is an unspeakable gift. God can do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask

or think. It was the pride and the joy of this great soul to match itself with these immeasurable thoughts and to fall before them vanquished and therefore victor. His triumph consisted in his willing recognition alike of his unfitness and of their majesty. Let me hasten to add that because it passes all our understanding this peace of God is not therefore beyond our reach and use. It is not like the coin which we cannot spend wisely until we know its full value. God does not put us through an examination before giving us the right to enjoy his gifts. I cannot tell you what life is nor can the profoundest thinker of the ages, but none the less can I exult in it. Thousands of brave sailors piloted their way on the ocean by the pale light of the stars, although they knew nothing of their size, their elements, or their distance. So is it with the peace of God. Before it the understanding flags and fails. It travels so far forward that no finite mind, however fleet, can keep pace with it or hope to bring it within the measurable bounds of our thought. But we may throw open our souls and let the peace of God flow in and fill the steps of life with tuneful breath. For as Bossuet says truly, "The heart has reasons that the reason does not understand."

3. This brings us to the third feature in this peace. It keeps our hearts and minds. The Apostle Paul is now in a state of impassioned

enthusiasm that personifies every subject which it touches. To him peace is a living, active reality. Will you notice the character and the extent of the part which it is here pictured as playing?

Its character is described in the one word "keeps," better rendered in the Revised version, "guards." Apparently the image which rose to his enraptured mind was that of a sentinel marching around the tent in which his general rested. Not at all improbable is it that the tramp of the Roman soldier as he kept mounted guard over him may have been seized and preserved to all time by Paul. However this may be, what he meant was that God's peace, a sentinel guarding the soul, encircled it in a constant march. Tennyson has caught the thought when he sings:

> I keep
> Within his couch on earth, and sleep
> Encompassed by his faithful guard,
> And hear at times a sentinel
> Who moves about from place to place,
> And whispers to the world of space,
> In the deep night, that all is well.

As to the extent of the work which this peace does, that is set forth in the words, "your hearts and minds." Paul could not say much about the sentinel. He passeth understanding. But he did know something of the treasure that he guarded. We need to remember that no contrast was here

suggested between the heart as the seat of feeling, and the mind as the sphere of thought. This unfortunate distinction no Hebrew would have made. The heart was the source, the mind what flowed from it. The physical life; then the life of intelligence; then the personal life, that which makes me myself and not another; the inner life and the hidden, which belongs to me and with which no stranger intermeddleth—all this is intended by the heart. And the mind is that outer life which results from the inner. God's peace penetrates to the universal chamber and broods over the thought which is there, and then it passes out to encircle all to which that thought leads. It touches the farthest reaching action and the farthest sounding word. Try to conceive of the apostle's vivid image, the sentinel peace marching with velvet feet around the earthly house of our tabernacle, the tent in which you have your present home. With noiseless step, with form invisible, silent as the dew or the sunbeam, this divine guard is always there. "For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

4. Our last and crowning thought is that all this is done "through Christ Jesus." Of the life which is hid with Christ in God is this true. To believers he was writing and of believers he was thinking. This, then, is Christian security.

I have said that such words as these of our text

must have meant a great deal to Paul which we almost inevitably miss. How could he write of peace to the Philippians without a personal remembrance guiding his pen? Imprisoned now in Rome, "a worn and fettered Jew," he has pressed his guard into the service and transformed the rough Roman into white-robed peace, and his thoughts must perforce run back to that other prison, the jail at Philippi, in which the inner cell and the chafing stocks could not quench his confidence or silence his prayers and his praises. A strain from that same all-victorious gladness is heard throughout this letter which, as has been said, is all summed up in two sentences, "I rejoice. . . Rejoice ye." Illustrated by his own experience in their city, Paul would have this same sentinel peace, who had kept his heart and mind in the prison, encircle the believers at Philippi too. So he beseeches Euodias and Syntyche, two women who had labored with him in the gospel, to be of the same mind in the Lord. Friction elsewhere dies away when "in the Lord" becomes the very atmosphere of their lives.

Ah, but, better yet than Paul or his converts in Philippi, this peace in Christ Jesus has been exemplified in Christ Jesus himself. The poor Roman prisoner, indebted to distant friends for ministries of money, yet spreading forth his chained hands in benediction and invoking peace on his far-off brethren, giving them out of his abundant poverty a

treasure richer than any other the earth could hold, finds a nobler parallel in his Master. On the edge of that bleak chasm in the depths of which lay Gethsemane, as on its farther side rose the cross, Christ had made his disciples wealthy beyond words to picture, as he said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Brethren, he who has Christ has God. The sentinel is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ himself. "He is our peace."

XVII

THE WATER OF THE WELL OF BETHLEHEM

And David was then in an hold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem. And David longed, and said, Oh, that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate! And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the Lord. And he said, Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mighty men.

—2 Samuel 23 : 14–17.

XVII

THE WATER OF THE WELL OF BETHLEHEM

This is an Old Testament "short story," and the verses which we have read tell it all. In the full history of David's life as shepherd, soldier, and sovereign, the incident finds no place, but here, when he speaks his last words, he recalls it. In the calm sunset which followed a life of storm and stress the remembrance of this splendid deed of daring performed on his behalf by the three mighty men stood out clear and bright in the afterglow which now bathed his earlier days. How the Philistines lay between him and Bethlehem, and how in his thirst he longed for a draught from the well of his boyhood, and how these three warriors dashed throngh the lines of the enemy and brought it back to him, and how, refusing to drink of it, he poured the water out as an offering to Jehovah. Here is a story in four chapters, in the first of which we see,

1. Memory creating Desire. "And David longed, and said, Oh, that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!" It was harvest time, and the Philistines, the

traditional foes of Israel, had waited until the fields of the Hebrews waved with golden grain, and then sweeping down to forage they filled the plain with their forces · their beasts were soon laden with the ripe wheat, while from the towers of Bethlehem the officer in command kept watch. Where David was is uncertain, except that it was in some mountain fastness where he and his band, outlawed by Saul and at strife with all the world besides, were wont to hide themselves. David was very human. The undying interest which in every age and country is sure to be aroused by the mention of his name is due to this. His virtues show us ourselves at our best, his crimes at our worst; but he never loses that one touch of nature which "makes the world kin." And now in this barren limestone cavern, with the fiercest harvest heat quivering on crag and bush, there came to him "one of those sudden accesses of home-sickness which belong to his character." He who has never known the feeling himself is to be pitied, either because he has had no home worthy of the name, or because he himself is not worthy of the home. Perhaps it was when pushing from his lips the brackish and muddy water which was all that the stronghold could yield that by force of contrast he recalled the pure, sparkling draught of the spring at the gate of Bethlehem —water so precious that it was afterwards conveyed by costly conduits to Jerusalem. Oh, for

a draught of that! Such memories come to us all, and oftener than not they are memories which if they sadden our hearts do at the same time soften our natures. So the prodigal in the far country among the swine, and with only husks to feed on, cries, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" And in our own literary history, Cowper receives his mother's portrait, and a flood of memories rushes in and overwhelms him as he sighs, "Oh, that those lips had language!" and, later, another poet, breathing the bracing breath of the pine trees, sings:

I used to think their slender tops
Were close against the sky:
It was a childish ignorance,
But now 'tis little joy
To know I'm farther off from heaven
Than when I was a boy.

It is safe to say that as David glanced across the years of sin and sorrow, the well of Bethlehem looked more attractive and its waters to his remembrance were cooler and sweeter than ever they had been to his taste when he was a shepherd lad and drank of them freely, none daring to make him afraid. And so we who are still near the gates of life, the portals through which in our first consciousness we pass to run our race and fight our battle,

are planting memories which will never die. Forget them no doubt we shall, as the sailor forgets the Bible his mother laid away in his chest, but there they are. And the time is almost sure to come when the remembrance of them—of the old home, of the dear faces, of voices hushed on earth forever, of early moments of simple faith, and early words of childish prayer—we shall cry "Oh, that one would give me drink of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!"

2. The memory creating desire, desire in its turn stimulated devotion. "The three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David." The longing for the water was perhaps little more than a passing whim, but to these loyal soldiers of his it was equivalent to a command. The band of his followers originally consisted of "those who were in distress, and those who were in debt, and those who were discontented." Distress, debt, and discontentment have often recruited such companies of free lances; but in this instance the innate nobleness of David's character, with all its faults never grander than in times of trouble, and rising to the sublime when face to face with one of the tragedies of life, had called forth all that was best in them. This is what nobleness does. It is like some true, clear note struck, which as it sounds rouses kindred

echoes in unsuspected places. In the presence of some sudden display of magnanimity or charity men are shamed out of their littleness and meanness, and a new spirit is created in them, as the rough and limited fishermen and peasants of Galilee, towering up before the priests of Jerusalem and loftier far than they, drew forth the unwitting testimony to the divine power of Christ: "They took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." "We live by admiration, hope, and love."

So these three men who are nameless, as the details of their daring adventure are also unwritten, dashed through the hosts of the Philistines and drew the water from the well at the gates of Bethlehem and brought it safely to their captain. All we care to know we are told, and that is that David's slightest wish it was a joy to them to gratify, although it might be at the peril of their lives. When the water reached him, was it the water of his boyhood? Perhaps carried in a hot helmet, and inch by inch fought for through the scattered lines of the foe, it was unlike, indeed, to the cool, pure, sparkling draught which had so often refreshed the lips of the shepherd lad keeping his father's sheep on those happy fields. And certainly it is not always safe for us to revive our early memories after long years have gone over us. They, like the water from the well, have not improved by carrying. You need the little child's lips to say the

little child's prayer, the child's eyes to look on the child's toys, the child's heart to prize the child's pleasures. I think that the delight which the grandfather feels in his grandson's enthusiasm over his first achievements, his prowess at the games, his skill at his studies, is due in part to the half-pathetic feeling that it all represents something which to him will return nevermore.

But be that as it may, the devotion of these men was none the less fine :

> Theirs not to make reply,
> Theirs not to reason why,
> Theirs but to do and die.

We see in it the true love which pours its "ointment, very precious," over the Master's feet in a recklessness of absolute devotion at the very opposite extreme to the spirit of hard, unimaginative economy which mutters, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence?" And the devotion is fine because it does not wait for some great thing to do. A mother does not suppress her love for her child until a crisis demands its display, any more than Niagara holds back its waters until some prince or potentate comes to look at it. God lavishes his love on the meanest flower that blows and the smallest creature that breathes. And in every instance of devotion—be it human or be it divine—that which prompts it is not the worthiness

of the object so much as its own great wealth of love. Devotion to his art often led the old painter to put his finest work into some petty detail in his picture; and when these rough outlaws found their way through the Philistine ranks and brought the water, it was not the draught itself, but it was David that made them brave to dare and to do.

3. Memory created desire; desire stimulated devotion; and then devotion kindled reverence. When the wish for the water broke from his lips David was suffering, as the sensitive nature does, from depression. The shepherd days were the happiest his life had seen. Courts and camps had brought him only disappointment and chagrin. He was homeless now, and this ragged company of bankrupt malcontents was a poor substitute for earlier dreams and hopes. But when, begrimed and bleeding the three heroes burst into his presence and placed the helmet full of water from the Bethlehem well in his hands, David's true self once more stood up in its strength. This was something to be proud of indeed; it was courage, it was courage inspired by love, love for him; ah, but it was more: it was what we rightly name high-mindedness. And the world is never so far gone in sin, or never so deep down in despair, but that it can recognize that. Notice, then, how at a bound David rose to do honor to this deed of true nobleness: "My God, forbid it me, that I should do this thing: shall

I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy?" Water, water out of the well of Bethlehem? No, it is far more and far more precious than that. It is blood, the life-blood of my bravest and best! The genuine worth of a thing is not to be estimated at its market price. The question is, How much blood has gone to the making of it? how much loss of life has been entailed in its production? This is what Tom Hood meant when in "The Song of the Shirt," which roused as few things have the conscience of the world, he cried,

> O men, with sisters dear!
> O men with mothers and wives!
> It is not linen you're wearing out,
> But human creatures' lives!

To think of God's price on the innocence which is betrayed, and the purity which is sullied, and the love which is spurned or held by us so cheap! When the old Roman emperor fed slaves to his fishes to gratify his depraved appetite he was only one in a long procession of men and women who from the days of Cain until now have been indifferent to the eternal truth that each one of us in this great human family is his brother's keeper. I say that the sacredness of a thing is to be measured not by its face value, but by the life which has been given on its behalf. This is the truth which rises to its

highest application when Paul pleads with the strong and free on behalf of the weak : " Destroy not him for whom Christ died." But it is a truth with as many facets as a diamond has, and all are luminous with meaning for us. There is the life-blood of men of whom the world is not worthy, in the building up of our religious liberties. For this Bible, as it lies before me, Wycliffe imperiled his life, and Tyndale surrendered his. For this right to worship in our own way and according to our own consciences men went to the stake, else it had never been ours. The Declaration of Independence, which we hold so lightly, is sacred to me if I remember that the men who signed it did so, if not in fact yet in the highest reality, in their own blood. Nay, this life itself was given to each of us at the hazard—perhaps in some cases at the cost—of a mother's life. That crimson tinge which David saw in the water brought from Bethlehem colors the dearest draught which daily we lift to our lips. Those who were present at one of the earliest church councils felt a strange thrill of reverence as into the great hall filed the confessors of this common faith, one limping with the seared sinew, another bereft of sight, " Men who had hazarded their lives for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." The faintest breath, the feeblest whisper, from such men was of infinite value—their life-blood had been poured into the veins of the young church.

4. And so—memory creating desire, and desire stimulating devotion, and devotion kindling reverence—the last chapter is reached when reverence impels to sacrifice. "He would not drink it, but poured it out unto the Lord." Because he himself would not take it, it was not therefore to be wasted. In the presence of this splendid exhibition of devotion David forgot his thirst; this was a draught purer and cooler and sweeter than the well of Bethlehem could give. The water as he held it became a sacrament! No human life was worthy to take it, as no transient thirst was worthy to be slaked by it. Too good to drink, it was not too good to sacrifice; too precious for self, it was not too precious for God. For him, indeed, nothing is too good or too costly, and our best only becomes best when it is consecrated to him. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

XVIII

THE PASSING AND THE PERMANENT

Remember them that had the rule over you, which spake unto you the word of God ; and considering the issue of their life, imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, yea and forever.

—*Hebrews 13 : 7, 8. R. V.*

XVIII

THE PASSING AND THE PERMANENT

THE Epistle to the Hebrews is the Epistle of contrasts. The unknown writer stood at the parting of the ways, as one who, by a steep and narrow path, has reached a point where suddenly the broad sunlit landscape opened out before him. One hand was laid upon the old dispensation, for which he had the profoundest reverence; the other upon the new, for which he had the most enthusiastic admiration. There was no opposition between the two. The path led to the prospect. The law was the schoolmaster to bring to Christ, and Christ himself was the end of the law. But how great was the difference! How impressive were the contrasts! In times past God spoke by the prophets; now by his Son. The sacrifices had died out upon the altars, because the one sacrifice for sin had been offered up once for all. The key-word of the Epistle is "better"; and not that he loves the old dispensation less, but only because he loves the new dispensation more, the writer never seems to weary of the music of it. A better hope; a better covenant; a better sacrifice;

a better resurrection; a better country; a better and an enduring substance. Our text is to be found among the brief counsels and injunctions—the fragmentary last words of a friend which he speaks when ready to depart; but this same sense of contrast is, if possible, stronger than ever before. The contrasts themselves, however, are different. Not the dispensation alone, but many other things as well were changing. The Christian religion itself was developing new forces and assuming new aspects. The disturbing elements in our religious life over which to-day we alternately congratulate ourselves and mourn, were present equally in this first century of our era. The writer of these words was like a man who had with difficulty gained a foothold on the solid rock, while all about him swirled and surged angry, contending waters. He watches them as they battle below him, and then with infinite relief he turns to his abiding resting-place. "Jesus Christ," he cries, "the same yesterday and to-day, yea and forever."

The points of resemblance between his position and our own are so many and so instructive that we may well take our stand by the side of this devout observer, and notice, first, the Passing Influence, and then the Permanent Presence revealed by our text.

1. What, then, were the passing influences which the author of this Epistle beheld, and on which he

read the inevitable sentence of change and decay? They seem to have been three: the world, certain theological opinions, the Christian ministry—united only in this one truth that in them all there were elements of transience.

As to the world of that old era, if we could spare the time to examine it we might at first be tempted to conclude that it had very little in common with our own. But I believe on calmer reflection we should come to recognize the fact that after all the differences between any two centuries or any two countries are less in number and infinitely less in importance than are the resemblances. There is but one human heart. Human nature does not materially change as the centuries roll on; and there has always been a great deal of it in the world. I am afraid that we have not yet outgrown the feature in the daily life of these old days to which our attention is drawn in this chapter. "Let your mind be free from the love of money." The canker then is the canker now. Call it covetousness, or selfishness, or worldliness, it resolves itself into an inordinate affection for this material life and for those things which perish in the using. And what concerns us is this one pathetic truth, that apostasy has in every age, in every church, yes, in every heart, been fed and fostered by nothing so much as by an undue love for this present but passing world. "All that is in the world"—the

words swing with sullen sound over the graves of so many bright hopes which have made shipwreck here—"the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

A second changing influence the author marked in what he calls "divers and strange doctrines." Probably the reference is to the insistence by the stricter Jews upon traditional distinctions between one kind of meat and another, coupled with an assurance that abstinence would somehow purify the spiritual life, while indulgence would defile it. The question, in this special bearing of it, may have very little interest for us; but still, as then, the golden sentence of this chapter is needed: "It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, not with meat." It is not ritual, it is not fasting, it is not a slavish adherence to the letter; no! but it is grace, the free grace of Jesus Christ, the liberty wherewith he maketh us free, which builds up Christian lives. And to take a yet wider application of these words it is well for us to remember that whatever treasures we may snatch, like wreckage from the breaking up of some noble ship, out of the currents in which are borne these "divers and strange doctrines" which have a charm for some of us as they are swept along on the

eddies of the hour, they can never take the place of the rock. At best

> They are but broken lights of thee;
> And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

Now we will turn to a third influence to which the writer of this Epistle refers, and which was, I believe, most deeply impressed on his heart as he penned the words of our text. The world was passing away. These divers and strange doctrines were soon swept by, and out of sight would ere long most of them be out of mind. But it was not so in this third illustration of human transience. I mean the Christian leaders of that time. Faithful pastors who have been with us in our joys and in our sorrows until our fortunes seemed bound up in them; and faithful preachers whose words gained an added eloquence from their lives, what shall we say as to them?

Notice, then, these three words which, like three strands in a rope, bind every Christian congregation to the honorable succession of its ministers. These words are, Remember; Consider; Imitate.

(1) Remember them that had the rule over you. The church was young at this time, but it was not too young to have its graves! Already memory had begun her reign. The heirlooms which are so rich to-day as we look back over the history of Christianity were even then accumulating. For

two reasons the Christian minister is said here to be worthy of remembrance. He has "had the rule." During his life he demands and deserves, as we learn from a later verse, obedience. The church has always been on the outlook for leaders, and she has always been glad to follow them. "Not as being lords over God's heritage, but as examples to the flock," Christian ministers need to be Christian generals. And he is a poor general who does not know how to make his powers to guide and organize and lead to victory felt. Ah, but the true leader gains his influence and lives in a golden glory of memory for one reason supremely. He has "spoken unto us the word of God." The man with a message from his Master may be weak in himself, but he is mighty through God. We look not at the poor paper or fading ink of some precious autograph, but on the autograph itself. Our lives and leadership are current coin if they bear the image and superscription of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

(2) Then consider the issue of their lives. Perhaps the writer is thinking of the flash of the axe or the fierce flare of the flames, or the gleam of the lion's white teeth and angry eyes, but I think he was rather looking forward of all this. It was not the martyrdom with which many of these Christian pastors sealed their fate, so much as something which lay beyond that. "Consider earnestly"

what the leadership of the leader was worth to himself, where the preacher's word led him. You see how he is preparing his readers for his other and better thought. His lips are impatient to mention the name which is above every name. So he says,

(3) "Imitate their faith." It is easy to bask in sunny memories; it is easy from some indolent vantage-point to watch the martyr leap from the blood-stained sand of the arena to the embrace of his Lord, but this is not enough. "Imitate"—what? Their creed? No. Their actions? No. This would be to destroy all originality either of conviction or of conduct. Think for yourselves! Live your own life! But imitate their faith; drink into their spirit. Ah, dear friends, the one thing which lives as we bury our Christian dead out of sight, or as we part with faithful pastors and leaders, is the spirit of their ministry. The alabaster box of ointment is indeed crushed; but if the ointment itself has been poured out in honor of our dear Lord, the fragrance of it lingers yet.

> I ask them whence their victory came,
> They with united breath
> Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb,
> Their triumph to his death.

So by a rising scale the writer has led us from a passing world to passing currents of religious thought, and thence up to this long, this honorable,

this sublime procession of the Christian ministry. All these are transient. Now, the step is a very short one.

2. The Permanent Presence. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, yea and forever." The cast of the sentence is picturesque, but it is not necessarily precise. The "yesterday" in the writer's mind may have been the time of Christ's earthly life, with the morning light falling on the stable of Bethlehem and the home of Nazareth; and with the noonday splendor resting on the triumphs of miraculous power and gracious speech; and with the twilight, sombre and tragic, gathering about the garden and the cross. If this be so, then the "to-day" to which he alludes will be the glory of Christ's present enthronement. Then he is the same as he was on earth—"this same Jesus." Stephen saw him in enraptured glimpses at his martyrdom, and Saul of Tarsus beheld him at his conversion, and John from the exile on Patmos. Unchangeable still he will be "unto the ages." "Forever!" What is certain is that the words declare Christ to be eternally the same. Now will you think of this for a moment? The law of this visible universe, written on mountain and plain, on every breaking wave and bursting blossom, is progress through change. The same law undoubtedly holds in the universe of thought. Our systems of philosophy and of theology have often to be

broken up and made over again. Our thinking stagnates like the Dead Sea unless some river Jordan of healing life pours into and passes through it. From James, slain with the sword, to the last volunteer for missionary service our ministry moves on in a pauseless, unbroken, continuous train. But meanwhile—"from before the foundation of the world" until now, and forward through all the ages—Jesus Christ is the same. Why? The answer comes back instantly from this very Epistle: "Unto the Son God saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou art the same and thy years shall not fail." Read the law which underlies these great utterances. What does it say? Why, it says that God has put into the heart of everything that is imperfect this principle of change, into our fair earth, into our eager thinking, into our honored ministry. At our peril do we arrest the current of wholesome progress which sweeps through these. But that which is perfect changes never. Listen: "Being made perfect he became the author of salvation unto all them that obey him." "Perfect" remember, not in spite of but by means of his agony and bloody sweat, his cross and passion. "Perfect through suffering." This was what Christ himself declared: "The third day I shall be perfected . . . for a prophet cannot perish out of Jerusalem" Perfected by perishing. The author of

this Epistle to the Hebrews saw the atonement of which the old dispensation with a hundred voices prophesied, fulfilled, completed, perfected, in the death of Christ, taking away the sins of the world.

So we come upon something which is unchangeable. Here let us remain rooted and grounded in three thoughts suggested naturally by our text.

(1) First, Christ is the unchangeable leader. The church must be aggressive, but in every forward movement it must listen to the command of the great Captain. "Press where you see my white plume wave amid the ranks of war." If there is a march in which, as of old, Jesus does not go before his disciples, it is because his disciples have lost their way. We hear much of new methods of reaching men. Well, if they all center about Christ. If he leads us into these broader fields we can safely follow. Christ has often waited for us, as he did for his disciples on the shore of Galilee. He is waiting now in dark places of the earth, in the dens of our great cities, in regions remote from our ordinary church life and to reach which we shall have to break down stubborn walls of prejudice and sloth. But we are bound to follow him, as Luther did in the Reformation, when Christ led him out of the monastery cell; and as Wesley did when Christ led him from the decorous dullness of the parish church to the open air when the gospel had to be preached to the unchurched multitude.

(2) Then, secondly, Christ is the unchangeable message. By "the word of God" in our text we know that what is meant is this: Christ is God's final word to this great world. Calvary is all that God has to say as to our human sin and as to his divine salvation; and the empty sepulchre is all that God has to say as to the new and risen life; and Bethany, with its visions of an ascending Lord, is all that God has to say as to heaven and as to the second coming without sin unto salvation. Men never weary of listening to this message. The other day in the city of Geneva they opened reverently the chest in which was preserved the violin of Paganini, and called the most skillful performer living to touch its chords afresh; and as he did so the old music poured forth sweet and stirring. Ah, brethren, the fingers of apostles and martyrs may no longer play on this matchless instrument, but the chords shall not fail to vibrate to the music of salvation if we will but hold ourselves loyally to the score written by the divine hand—the word of God.

(3) And finally, more wonderful still, Christ is not only the unchangeable leader and unchangeable message, but he is also the unchangeable power. There is indeed an historic Christ; and it is necessary to-day to insist upon it that he is the basis of Christianity. The apostles may have been deceived; but they were not themselves deceivers.

They believed in the actual life of which they had themselves been the eye-witnesses. You cannot get rid of the historical element in Christianity and yet retain one page of this New Testament intact. You cannot do so unless first you dismiss the evangelists with their simple, artless story, and then that great apostle whose whole teaching was built up on the conviction, "Last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." If we do not linger continually about these holy fields trodden centuries ago by His blessed feet, it is not that we do not believe in them. But it is because we show our faith in the spring far up the mountain-side by launching out on the broad river which has flowed from it. The historic Christ is the living Christ. He is with us. He is the Christ of our history, he is the Christ of our homes, he is the Christ of our hearts. We are here because Christ is here. "Where Christ is, there is the church." It is he who builds the church, it is he who gathers around him the fellowship of his followers, it is he who inspires us with our message, it is he who to-day as much as yesterday thrills human souls with the fulfillment of his promise: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

> Star unto star speaks light; world unto world
> Repeats the password of the universe,
> The name of Christ.

XIX

SUCCESSFUL CHRISTIAN SERVICE

But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

—*Acts 20 : 24.*

XIX

SUCCESSFUL CHRISTIAN SERVICE

SURROUNDED by the elders of the Ephesian church, who had come here at his bidding, Paul stood on the seashore in the harbor of Miletus and spoke these words. This hasty interview with his friends was possible only while the ship bound for Tyre lay at anchor in the offing, so that we may say that the stay at Miletus was a parenthesis in his voyage, and the address to the elders was a parenthesis in the stay at Miletus, and—which is the point of special interest to us now—these words are themselves a parenthesis in the address itself. The main thought we recover by omitting the verse from which our text is taken and that which precedes it and reading then: "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem not knowing the things that shall befall me there, and now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more."

The strong feeling in these verses and in the parenthesis of our text is, however, the same. Such a life as this which Paul was now leading was a

checkered course, composed of certainties and uncertainties. Not knowing what should befall him, he yet knew that these brethren would see his face no more; not knowing the things which should befall him save this—spoken with a certain pathetic humor—that in every city bonds and afflictions were in store for him. He was not sure of sunshine, but as to the shadows he was quite sure of them. The one certainty of his life now and in Jerusalem and on to the end was this element of suffering.

Out of this consideration rose the loftier thought which found utterance in our text, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." We do justice to the supreme consideration of the whole life and ministry of the apostle only when we see here a description of successful Christian service. This description was never truer than it is to-day, and we shall do well to study the secret, the aim, and the inspiration of such a ministry as Paul lived out in the first century and as in the nineteenth may be lived out by us.

1 The secret of successful service. There are many ways of reading the first clauses of this verse. The words, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself," picture so graphically the apostle's temper that we almost resent

any change. The Revised version, running the two clauses into one, reads, "But I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself." And whichever rendering we choose, the thought is practically the same. "My life"—it is with this that each one of us is most interested. A man may not have much else, but anyhow he has a life, a poor thing, perhaps, but his own. You may sell him into slavery, you may immerse him in business. you may distract him with cares, but these minutes and hours and years are, after all, not yours but his. And in every life there come times when the soul—the self—in the man thrusts lesser things aside, as the strong swimmer flings the salt waves off and dashes the spray from his eyes and rises to look the blue sky overhead full in the face. Such times we should encourage. They are indispensable for us if we are to do our best work. A man in a huge factory is tied down to just one thing. He must keep fingers and eyes fastened on the one little bit of machinery for which alone he is responsible. The tyranny of this petty concentration becomes sometimes intolerable. He does well, when that feeling of weary disgust comes on him, to throw his few inches of task work aside and, instead of keeping at it, to go through the whole factory Let him see the great completed machines of which his little piece forms what may seem an insignificant part, and learn that in truth it is not insignificant,

but essential. Life is indeed made up of trifles; ah, but life itself is no trifle. The boy at school bound down to moods and tenses needs the inspiration which comes to him when the master opens the great Latin poem and reads in free translation some splendid passage. The pupil beating out the scales must be relieved, now and again, by hearing what that practice amounts to when patience has her perfect work in Mozart or Mendelssohn.

There are, then, two ways of looking at a life of perpetual service. The first concerns itself chiefly with its incidents. And perhaps we do not sufficiently consider that to all true men and women serving their own generation by the will of God this is just what life is: a succession of petty and often irritating details. The heroic moments are few. The stretches of far-reaching sand before the green palm trees and the cooling well come in sight are many. Paul is no more unconscious of the incidents than are any of us. They are not of a nature to be ignored. "Bonds and afflictions" are to be met and surmounted day by day. But he says, "I make account of nothing"; "these things do not move me." There are pastors who take careful account of every bell which they ring and every prayer which they offer in their ministry, and so they never allow themselves to rise above the arithmetic table. They seize some annual opportunity for recounting the minutiæ of their service,

and too often they do this with the unconfessed purpose to evoke the admiration of their people. Paul asked for no admiration and neither did he ask for any compassion. Pity or admiration seems out of place in the lives of the men who die daily.

Better, far better, is it to look at life in its entirety. These things do not move me. They go to make up my life, and what shall I say about that? "Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." It is as though he had said that his main ambition was not to live out his life, but only to carry through his ministry. Here is a new ideal; alas that it should to so many persons in our own country and all the world over be still new. The savage had his conception of life, and it was the conception of self-indulgence. The Roman had his, and it was the conception of self-aggrandizement. The Greek had his, and it was the conception of self-culture. The Christian conception, rising clear up into the heavens, was that of self-sacrifice. Jesus Christ is the great model of self-sacrifice, and to-day, as Napoleon said, millions will die for him. Let me add, in one word, that the influence of any Christian ministry is to be measured by this. Men and women will bow before the power of a life of complete, willing, unstinted, self-sacrifice.

2. The aim of successful service. The feeling with which the innumerable details of a life of service is regarded is not, let us understand, a feeling of indifference, and still less is it a feeling of contempt. Because the workman does not pause to count the tale of bricks he is not scornful of them; each one goes to the building of the pyramid. Every moment in a good man's life and every incident in it falls into its place, and, like the tramp of each soldier, swells the music of the march. A man may refuse to take stock now, but this is only because he expects to take stock in another and more impressive day of account hereafter. Incompleteness may distinguish his life for the present just for this reason. Here are two very noble aspects of life.

First, life as a course. To Paul this was a familiar thought and readers of his Epistles know how great a favorite it was with him. The race of life! As he spoke now the great theatre of Miletus must have been full in view—its ruins still rise among the sands—and he very likely caught his image from it as just before he caught it from the rigging of the ship in which he was sailing. Here he says that he heeded not the faces thronging the race course if only he might win the goal at the end of it. Was he the preacher? Among them he had gone preaching the kingdom of God (ver. 25). Was he the pastor? From house to house for

three years he had ministered to them (ver. 20). Was that all? No. Preaching and visiting them, he had never lost sight of his supreme ambition, "that I might finish my course." The man in the ministry is more than the ministry; the self in the preacher is more than the sermon. This man has a race to run and a course to cover. The true minister does not lose sight of himself. He refuses to be merged in any body of men among whom he may happen to be numbered. He is a citizen and he will often insist upon his obligations to the community, but he will utterly refuse to sink himself in his citizenship. "We owe allegiance to the State, but——" He is in a local church, but he is more to himself than any local fellowship. He can do without a church sooner than he can do without a soul. He has certain great doctrines to set forth, but he is greater even than are they. "Take heed," Paul wrote to Timothy, "unto thyself and unto thy teaching." The man must come first.

> Thou must be true thyself
> If thou the truth would'st teach:
> Live truly, and thy life shall be
> A great and noble speech.

"Religion," as Jeremy Taylor says, "is rather a divine life than a divine knowledge." I can go out of the country and out of the church, but I cannot go out of myself!

Then, as another aspect of life, it is a ministry. "My course . . . my ministry." We must guard against letting any one class in the community or any one vocation among all the occupations in which we engage claim an exclusive right to this great word, "ministry." To minister is to serve, and, as Milton told us in his blindness, "He also serves who only stands and waits." Adolph Monod, on his deathbed, could only gather about him a little circle of friends to whom to speak of divine things, but those who listened bore witness that never did he speak with such power and eloquence. "My life is my ministry," the dying preacher said, "and I will exercise it till my latest breath." The ministry of the Christian holds all the world as its parish, and no place is too humble or too remote to be its pulpit.

But some time the course must lie all behind the racer, not another step to be run! and the ministry even of the sick-room and the deathbed is finished, not another breath to be drawn! That is the point on which, without any cessation, the mind of Paul is always fastened, "that I might finish my course, and my ministry." These two grand views of our life—as a race to be run, as a ministry to be carried through—do not close in any uncertainty, they do not vanish in thin air. See, yonder is the fixed goal and the racer is touching it at last. Listen, by and by you shall listen only to silence; the

heart will beat no more, the ministry is finished. And this conception of the successful completion alike of the race and the service must give us our constant aim.

3. The inspiration of service. Very briefly, we follow the words of our text in order to learn what this is.

First, this ministry had been "received from the Lord Jesus." Paul had taken his marching order from the Commander himself. "Rise and stand upon thy feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee." And not alone this, which made him so confident in his course, that he was "an apostle not of man neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father," but there was also the example of his Master. Christ himself might have spoken our text. He did live it. And so it is in this very discourse to the elders at Ephesus that Paul recalls a familiar sentence not to be found in the Gospels, "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

And, second, this ministry was all summed up in this one mighty message, "to testify the gospel of the grace of God." To testify—the word was much in his mind just then and he used it three

times. "The Holy Ghost testified that in every city——" ; and as for himself, he was " to testify the gospel," to testify " repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." What a welcome, what an inspiring message ! How it rises above the multitude of petty interests with which men are concerning themselves, as above the chatter on board a great ship one catches now and again the thunderous tones of the Atlantic. Brethren, this is the message which the world needs, and no Christian runs his course or fulfills the ministry of his life unless by word or example or spirit he takes up his share in delivering it.

Years ago, on the seashore of a busy harbor, these words were spoken by an obscure Jew on his way to persecution, suffering, and to death ; spoken to a little company of men still more obscure than he. The seaport, with its boats and vessels ; the docks, with their merchandise ; the town, with its crowded interests ; the vast theatre, with its throng and plaudits—they are only pale ghosts now, memories which live, if they live at all, because once in the midst of them the eternal love of God, the gospel of his grace, was preached by that obscure Jew to that obscure company. It is the gospel which endures ; it is in preaching it that we find our immortality ; it is in living it out before the world that we make " full proof of our ministry."

XX

THE SYMPATHY AND SUCCOR OF CHRIST

For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.

—*Hebrews 2 : 18.*

XX

THE SYMPATHY AND SUCCOR OF CHRIST

THE earliest drift of doubt in reference to the person of Christ was in the direction of a denial of his humanity. This bright, fair vision of the evangelists was only a vision. The Christ of the Gospels was too good to be a man. The opposite extreme succeeded to it. His divinity was then questioned, and the story of his life being accepted, it was affirmed that he was too intensely human to have been divine. In the verse before us the writer is dealing with the first of these errors. He pictured Christ as a faithful and merciful high priest. Then was it not essential that he should be human as well as divine; man as well as God? The priest must be one chosen from among men. He must be "faithful" as toward God, but as toward men he must be "merciful"; "A faithful high priest in things pertaining to God"; "A merciful high priest" in order "to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." Let us remember that while the high priest was indeed the type of the purest and holiest man, still he was human. Remove him from the plane of humanity, and he

ceases to affect us in our sense of human need. There is a sympathy which even the worst of men can give to his brother man, better than the most exalted archangel before the throne. And, dear brethren, is it not so that we come to know the divine power in Christ, through first knowing the human? He who is called "Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace," comes to us with the announcement, first, of his perfect humanity. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given."

> Not in majesty supernal, sitting easy on a throne;
> Dealing sorrow out to others, with no sorrows of his own.

No; but "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." This is the line of thought pursued from the fourteenth verse on to our text; a line of thought which I venture to sum up in the assertion that the temptation of Christ was essential to his rendering that sympathy and succor which we so sorely need. You will notice that this last verse falls naturally into two divisions: first, "He himself hath suffered being tempted"; second, "He is able to succor them that are tempted." We will consider these in the order in which they come.

1. "He himself hath suffered being tempted."

Believing, as we have said, that faith in the man Christ Jesus is the first step toward faith in the God Christ, we appeal against whatever has a

tendency to make that humanity of his unreal. His was not only human nature, but *our* human nature. We are to think, in conceiving of the earthly life of Jesus, not of Adam as he was first created, but of weak and sorrowing men and women as they gathered to Christ in Capernaum or Nazareth or Samaria. The Adam of Eden would have repelled them; he would have been so utterly unlike to themselves. But let us say at once, and boldly, that the attractive power in Christ centered primarily in this: "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities."

In trying to realize this we may think, first, of the common range of human requirements. Jesus was subject to them. He hungered in the wilderness of Judea; he thirsted beside the well at Sychar; he was worn out with fatigue when he lay in the tossing fisher-boat fast asleep. Night after night wrapped him in its gloom when he had no house to which to retire and no pillow on which to lay his head. A wanderer in the forest or on the mountain, he saw the foxes slink into their caverns and the birds fold their wings in their nests, but he himself was homeless. His companions were not men of noble character or fine accomplishments. With the world's scholarship and art, with its poetry and culture, he had to the last no dealings. But rough fishermen and simple artisans followed him, and although they must continually have

wounded his exquisite sensibility through blunt ignorance, yet no word, and scarcely even a sigh, escaped his lips to tell them so.

Rising higher, we shall understand what a trial his humanity was to him if we remember that Christ possessed the feelings of the noblest human soul. His was the psalm of life, but set in a higher key than any other had attained to. He loved and hated, he sorrowed and rejoiced, he scorned and welcomed, he moved along the whole wide range of human sensibilities, just as we do. Even that sense of confusedness which comes over all true natures at times when we see the weakness which is the child of sinfulness in its turn becoming the parent of guilt, and when all the foundations of the earth seem to be out of course, and when the perplexed spirit stands like the rock in the midst of counter-currents, which swirl and break upon it—even that feeling he appeared to have shared, in common with all the men of whom the world is not worthy.

Now pass on from this cursory glance at the life of our Lord, to remark that temptation was one inevitable consequence of possessing a nature such as this. We must beware of linking in the thought of sin as essential to the thought of temptation. Temptation primarily means just two things: first, a nature capable of trial; secondly, trial applied to that nature. Failure is not necessary and, indeed,

in a perfect nature would be impossible. It is as in the case of fine music, to which I suppose also two things are necessary, the delicate instrument and the skillful player. You are to think of Christ as the instrument, and of the world as the player. Now the mere fact that Jesus had this human nature involved temptations. You know how a man of coarse constitution will pass unmoved through trials from which one of finer organization will recoil in exquisite pain. Nerves will quiver in him of which the first is utterly unconscious. The world played on Christ as it played on none other. There was more in him exposed to its bitter blast. If any of you had a child so finely constituted as Jesus, you would learn to pray God to take that child to himself. Life, in its rough battle, life, in its heaving breakers, life, in its rude unfeelingness, life, in its vulgar coarseness, would have such an almost demoniac power to torment that fair, sweet being. I cannot look on a tropical flower transplanted to our hothouses, or on a foreign singing bird caged in our homes, or on a lion shut in behind bars, without a feeling of sorrow, which in the case of a human being would amount to indignation. Just think of this pure and perfect nature turned homeless and friendless into a world which had grown old in sin, and left then to its tender mercies.

Then this temptation must have been one long, unbroken suffering. We are apt to forget that

every great effort, whether intellectual or spiritual, in this world, is of necessity attended with pain. You listen to some noble singer, pouring his whole soul into his part in the oratorio of "The Messiah"—such men are rare, I know, but perhaps once in your lifetime you may hear a man who feels what he sings—that exercise is to him suffering. You are held spellbound by some orator, dealing with the highest themes, standing between the living and the dead and sublimely unconscious of his work; that appeal often means pain. It is not the fear of failure, in the one instance, it is not the sense of unworthiness in the other. In both cases it is a fine nature doing its finest work. So was it with Christ. "He suffered being tempted." His holy nature was incapable of evil, but it bent and trembled under the bitter and malignant blasts of sin, as a tree, deep rooted, bends and trembles under the storm. Had it been less firmly struck in the soil it must have yielded and fallen. Ask yourself, then, Whence came the suffering of Jesus? The only adequate answer is, From the essential features of our humanity. The more perfect the human nature, the more intense and exquisite the pain. Because he was human as none other, therefore he also suffered as none other. Had he been only human he must have yielded to sin, for there is no man living that sinneth not. But had he been not human at all, then he could not have suffered, and

his earthly life would have been a mere mask, a semblance of earnestness with no passionate tragedy behind it. "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

2. Pass on to the second assertion: "He is able to succor them that are tempted."

We must turn now from that solitary figure of a suffering Saviour to consider those to whom and for whom he came. "Them that are tempted." Now when you contrast Christ who could fearlessly say, "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me," with a mere man, groaning, "O wretched man" there may seem to be one broad distinction between the two which makes true sympathy and succor impossible. The one is incapable of sin, the other by nature is incapable of sinlessness. The apostle evidently holds the contrary. He exults in the perfection of Christ's ability to help us, and he bases that ability on two assertions: Jesus is "touched with a feeling of our infirmities," which means sympathy; Jesus is "yet without sin," which means succor. I ask your attention, then, to three points.

(1) In order to Christ's sympathy and succor it was not essential that he should sin. We can only understand what temptation meant, in the case of our Saviour, by studying at greater length than is

possible now, what happened to him in the wilderness. Briefly, however, he there met the three great forces of temptation before which you and I fall: "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life." His perfect human nature recognized the full power of each of these. He felt how natural it would be to command the stones to be made bread, how fascinating was the prospect of ruling over all the kingdoms of the world, how grand the confidence that, casting himself down from the height, angel hands would bear him up. He realized what it was for three mighty temptations to rush in and sweep through the channels provided for them in any human being. He had the desires for sustenance, for sovereignty, for security which were appealed to in these attacks of the tempter. So have we. Remember, there is no sin in having these. The sin lies entirely in their abuse. To take food was right, but not to take food at the instigation of the devil. To rule was right, but not to rule at the sacrifice of obedience to God as supreme. To trust in heaven was right, but not in defiance of heaven's promises. Christ in suffering being tempted saw the full force of rightful passions misdirected. This pained him, this kindled his compassion, this gave purpose and power to his help. "He was in all points tempted like as we are."

(2) But I go further. Sin is not essential, I have said, to sympathy and succor; but only that one

knows the force of sin mastering those channels in our nature which God has first of all formed. Let me add, sin is actually antagonistic to sympathy and succor. Bring to me any man who is sorely tempted, I will show you two extremes to which he will look in vain for either of these. The first is the extreme of sheer ignorance. The evil of classes lies just here. The rich do not know what it is to be poor, the influential have no acquaintanceship with weakness, the master not often thinks of himself as also a man. This stupid, wicked ignorance once carried into religion does more to make a poor sinner bitter and mad than anything else. These people professing to be Christians live, he says, at all events in their professions, away up there in another world, encircled by another atmosphere.

Then the opposite extreme is utter callousness, coming from thorough degradation. "What is this sympathy, what is this succor? Why should you be better than your fathers? You are in a world that cheats and lies, a world of profligacy and intemperance, a world of rivalry and rudeness—if you are so mighty particular you had better get out of the world. But if you stay in Rome, do as the Romans do." I know that novelists and poets would have us think that sin calls forth sympathy from other sinners. I do not believe it. Charles Dickens was right, in one of his saddest stories, when he made the robber beat the life out of his

companion because she struggled to escape from her shame and be better. Nay, Nathan touched this chord long before, when in his parable to the guilty David he roused the royal indignation against the sinner until he cried, "He shall surely die." Although the sin was his own, thinly disguised, yet he worked himself into a fine frenzy of unsympathizing anger against it. Sinners do not sympathize with sinners in their efforts to escape from sin. Men, bribed in elections, ring-thieves, and other low villains who are not so tenderly dealt with, will turn on their companions when dollars can be made out of playing the informer, and sacrifice them ruthlessly for gain or safety. Have you never heard how the play goes on in the gambling house halls when one miserable wretch shoots himself in his despair; how when the poor child on the trapeze falls and is broken, the audience clamors for the performance to go forward; how the man that was himself a slave makes the most savage slave-driver? At this moment the world's helpers and healers are those who are farthest removed from the weakness that needs helping, and the wickedness that needs healing. Fair, pure women, who are as far from falling as the mother of Jesus herself, are seeking the outcast; honest men, never tempted to fraud, are preaching integrity. Men and women from the heights are going down into the depths. Who feels the darkness so intensely

as he who lives in the light? Who should yearn over the prodigal like him who has been ever in his father's house? The great passion of Jesus for seeking and saving the lost, was a purpose born of a knowledge of what heaven meant, and what the Father's love was, and how glorious it was to have salvation—a passion, believe me, such as no sinful being could have touched in its intensity.

(3) This leads me to the third point. I have said that sin is not essential to sympathy and succor; then that sin is actually opposed to sympathy and succor. Now, I lay on the top-stone in the assertion that sin can be destroyed by sympathy and succor. Read the seventeenth verse, "Wherefore——." [Sin would have unfitted Christ to sympathize perfectly, and it would utterly have unfitted him to save. Christ was sinless.] This point is generally conceded by all readers of the Gospels. A man has to be far gone in skepticism who denies it. For us the words of Scripture will suffice as to the immaculate nature of his mind: "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." He could affirm boldly as none other could or can, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." [Yet he was full of sympathy, he was quick with succor. Yes; but for what? With the sin? No; this is our feeling. "Well; I do it myself, do not be hard on the man." Men are afraid to condemn sin because the condemnation rebounds.

And let me say that a great deal of the effeminate sentimentalism in which many persons indulge when treating of sin springs from this consciousness, and not from any true and noble feeling. Men preach softly of the sinner falling into drunkenness, profligacy, deceit, and those listening give them credit for an exquisite generous sympathy with the transgressor; all the while they are covertly defending the transgression. Of course, this is abhorrent to God; it is utterly and absolutely unchristlike. Christ never helped sin, but he did, to the very uttermost, help the sinner. Christ knew what it was to be that sinner without the sin, so he was "able to succor them that were tempted." The captain of an Atlantic steamer, out in a storm, will speak with a feeling to which you on the land must be a stranger, of weaker vessels than his exposed to the same hurricane. As his ship toils and struggles, thrills and trembles, he feels what the thunderous shock of those cataract waves must be to yonder other and frailer craft. So our Lord has, through that human experience of his a rare power of sympathy. "He knows what sore temptation means, for he has felt the same." Then, because he was so perfectly pure in himself he could be the Saviour of all that believe in him. Such salvation would have been impossible had he borne the slightest shadow of a stain of personal transgression. Are there those listening to me to whom this load

of sin has become well-nigh intolerable? "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." "A merciful, faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, he is able to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." And are there not others who have indeed laid their sins on Jesus, but yet need to yield themselves more fully to this priceless confidence in his sympathy, who was "in all points tempted like as we are," and in his salvation, who was "yet without sin"? Then "let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

XXI

SOME UNFINISHED THINGS

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.
—*Genesis 1 : 1.*

Even so, come, Lord Jesus.
—*Revelation 22 : 20.*

XXI

SOME UNFINISHED THINGS

THESE are the first words and the last in the Bible. I have placed them together, not at the bidding of mere caprice or of idle fancy, but in order that we may lay to heart one marked and suggestive difference between the passage from Genesis and the passage from Revelation. We are not surprised at the words with which the Scriptures open, "In the beginning." This is what we naturally look for. The Bible is, in many respects, a book of beginnings. The Old Testament in our text, then the life of Jesus in the Gospel by John, then the history of Christian progress in the Acts of the Apostles, then the glimpses into heaven in the Revelation, bring us face to face with the beginning of things.

But what does this lead us to expect when the Scriptures come to a close? The foundation of the building is a promise of completion, and we seem to hear the shouts with which, by and by, the top-stone shall be brought forth and lifted into its place, crown and consummation of the enterprise. Every beginning points forward to the

ending, every Alpha to an Omega, every first to the last. Surely, then, the final words of the Bible will be final. A conclusion will be reached. This, however, as you see from our text, is not the case. The Revelation closes without a close. A prayer, an aspiration, a note, one might say, of noble discontent is the last sound that we hear. "Even so come, Lord Jesus." "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." The Christ who ascended from Olivet is still the object of passionate expectation. For this unlooked-for ending of the Bible there must be some reason. Would it not be more welcome to us to read across this last page the words which we read across the first, "Then the heaven and the earth were finished, and all the hosts of them"? Why, then, are they not there? What profound wisdom is there in the question put by a famous writer of our century when he says, "Is it not better not to conclude?" We shall best answer this inquiry if we think for a while of the unfinished things amidst which we are living now.

1. The first of these is our earth. To make such an affirmation is not to contradict the earliest words in the Bible. The earth was indeed finished, but it was so subject to conditions that would inevitably change it continually. Was the mountain finished? It was destined nevertheless to alter its form with every rolling year and passing season. Was the

plain? Now covered with the mighty forest, before long the air would resound with the woodsman's axe and before many years had passed the populous city would rise where once the birds sang among the branches and the wild beasts cowered in the thickets. Then again the very words of the commission given to man at his creation contain a prophecy of inevitable change: "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it." Even yet the aspects of our earth are being transformed by the tides of population, by the standards of conquest, by the tread of the merchant, by the plow of the farmer, by the eager eye of the discoverer. Is Africa finished, when the sun of this century has lighted us for the first time to her broad rivers? Is America, when within the memory of man the bounds of civilization have been carried hundreds of miles to the west? More emphatically yet is the truth taught if we consider that beneath the skill with which it is builded, the beauty with which this earth is clothed, and the music with which it is filled, there is a ceaseless undertone of expectation. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." The purpose for which the Creator called it into being at the first has not yet been reached. It is unfinished still.

2. The second of these incompleted things of which we may think is our life. A finished life—did

you ever see one yet? It will, I suppose, be granted that the majority of lives are not finished. But what reason have we to make any exception to the broad assertion that this wonderful treasure which we call our life is complete in not even one instance? No two lives are alike save in this particular, and here all lives are lived in common. The physician bent over poor Oliver Goldsmith as he lay on his dying bed, restless and fevered, and he asked him, "Is your mind at ease?" "No, it is not," groaned the man who had made so many hearts lighter by his charming pen, and with these words he passed away. How did that confession differ from the feeling with which we all bid farewell to this present life? We are none of us satisfied in the sense that we have completed our round of being perfectly. Never since the very first has any one looking back over the finished work said, "It is very good." God might speak thus, but man never!

I need not pause to show how emphatically true this is as to the failures in life, the "social wreckage" which is evermore being cast up by the ocean of time upon the eternal shore; nor—to glance at the opposite extreme—need we linger over our children's graves, so pathetically short, so pathetically numerous, each one of which speaks of hopes blighted and plans frustrated and faculties nipped in the bud.

But how many lives are suddenly arrested, as

was the Alpine cataract centuries ago when against it the gauntleted hand of the ice was lifted and it froze solid and immovable to the end of time. To think of any life in the full flush of power and promise cut off is to think of music carried into another room. Somewhere, out of our hearing, the strain must certainly be continued.

Turn from such a life to the most successful. At what point is the successful man ready to say, "It is done"? Not because he is still reaping a golden harvest, in money, in fame, in friendships, no; but because as yet life has not yielded him what he hoped for. When Thomas Carlyle was writing his history of Frederick the Great and was half-way through with his task, "he discovered that Frederick was not great," and, he says, the disappointment robbed him of all zest and enthusiasm. So men find that what they are pursuing is not the noblest and the best, and the shadow of that conviction lies over their enterprise. Success has no longer its sparkle and beauty.

Or think of the life tranquilly pursued to its close. "Its close"? We are still children gathering the pebbles on the brink of an unexplored ocean. "Oh, sir," exclaimed John Foster, leaning over the edge of a precipice, "look down there. Look down there, sir. There's a leap, sir; one leap, sir—a bold leap—and in one moment I shall know the grand secret!" How fascinating is that

thought! But let it be resisted, let our life run its course calmly, when the end comes have we any feeling that it is complete? One of the most brilliant French women of her time said, when in the sunset of her days she sat waiting the order of release, and her queen asked if she were satisfied, "No, I am not at ease, but I am content." Content to be discontented. "Not as though I had already attained!"

You may refer me to the Christian as an exception to this rule. But far from being that, he is really the most illustrious example of our principle. "We are saved by hope." Do you not remember that exquisite touch at the close of "Pilgrim's Progress," when the writer watches the travelers as they pass into that city: "And after that," says he, "they shut up the gates; which, when I had seen, I wished myself among them"? Our joy is in the persuasion that here we have no continuing city.

> And I smiled to think God's greatness flowed around
> our incompleteness,
> Round our restlessness his rest.

Life is unfinished still.

3. The third of these incompleted things I find in the earthly life of Jesus. Such a life, so brief and yet so glorious, is only justified by the conviction that elsewhere it had its blossoming.

Christ's actions were full of unexplained meanings: "Whither I go thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me hereafter."

Christ's parables were hid treasure: "With many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it."

Christ's whole teaching was limited by the small capacity of his hearers. He held back the great truth that was in his heart bursting for utterance with the sad sentence, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."

Christ's life, was it complete? In its hour of richest promise it was severed by the cross. Christ's death, was it complete? "He led them out as far as unto Bethany, . . and he parted from them." Christ's ascension, was it complete? "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Each of these acts was indeed complete in itself, but that only because each carried in it a prophecy of yet better things to come. The cradle incomplete without the cross, the cross incomplete without the sepulchre, the sepulchre incomplete without the mount of ascension, the mount of ascension incomplete without the throne, the throne incomplete without the coming. The disciple who watched his Master vanish in the clouds and who heard the angels promise his return is he who breathes these last words of the Bible,

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus." The life of Jesus is in this sense unfinished still.

4. Once more, we mention, as another of these things which are yet incomplete, the gospel. Of course there is a sense in which, as the life of Jesus on earth is complete, so is this gospel. Nothing shall ever be added to it, as from it shall nothing be taken. But the life is not complete while it is unaccomplished. Oh, there is so much yet to learn of that brief but pregnant ministry. And so is it with the gospel. Listen: "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, until the day in which he was taken up." "Began." Then Christ's acts are still being performed and Christ's teachings are still being enforced. The gospel is incomplete in the world, for we see not yet all things put under Him. The gospel is incomplete in the Christian fellowship, the church, as we are wont to call it. "Waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" is the true attitude for us to assume. We scarcely dare read what Paul speaks of the future of the church: "A glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing." It is like deciphering an inscription full of patriotic confidence and pride on the ruined gate of a captured citadel. Tell me that the church of Christ is perfected and I surrender myself to despair. But tell me that in the faith in which we all rest, in the hope which we all

cherish, in the love which we all strive to encourage, this great fellowship of Christian believers is only like the reflection of the stars in the turbid and ruffled waters of the sea, and I dare to look up again.

The gospel is incomplete in the soul. I am conscious that this divine life struggles vainly for full expression in "this present life." Am I content to leave any one of the great doctrines of our salvation with the confident assertion that there is nothing more in it for me than has already been drawn out of it? Theodore Monod lies dying and his friends gather about him to speak of the life, so full of holy teaching for them all, that is now drawing to a close. The old man rises to a loftier height than that upon which they were conversing. What has he done? What has he said? Nay, he desires that on his gravestone these words alone shall be written, "Thus endeth the first lesson!"

These, then, are some of the things—and what momentous things they are!—of which we venture to say that they are unfinished yet. From their highest point of attainment they breathe a prayer of passionate aspiration such as closes the Bible. An incomplete earth, an incomplete life, an incomplete gospel.

Now let us gather up some few thoughts suggested by the truth of which we have been speaking.

1. First, then, it is plain that we dwell among unfinished things and these the very things which the world will not readily let die. How inspiring this is. There is a melancholy in traveling in the far East among the wrecks of bygone centuries, the ruins of half-forgotten empires. There is a sadness in wandering on the shore, where every wave flings at your feet the empty and broken shell which has once been "some happy creature's palace." But to live here is to live looking for the sunrise, to wait under the pale light of the stars for the dawn. This earth, this life, this gospel, each of them is an unfilfilled prophecy; a prophecy which is itself a pledge of final fulfillment. I move among their mightiest achievements as the Arab among the pyramids in whose hearts he believes slumber wonderful stores of treasure which shall yet be discovered.

2. Second, these prophecies shall never be fulfilled here. This is to me a most powerful argument for immortality. It is as though I had in my dreams heard a tune which no instrument on earth was capable of rendering. I believe that in another sphere that instrument shall be found. I do not indeed say that this earth may not yet become richer, this life more noble, this gospel more powerful. I believe they will. But for each of them there must be other conditions before they can reach completeness. We dwell now among the rudiments, the first sketches, the dim outlines:

For still we hope
That in a world of larger scope,
What here is faithfully begun
Will be completed, not undone.

3. Third, that this should be the case is evidently in accordance with God's purpose. "The highest reach of human science," says the foremost metaphysician of his day, "is the scientific recognition of human ignorance." But is this what God meant to be the highest point attainable by his creature? "Nothing is good," it has been affirmed, "which does not carry us beyond itself." Here, then, is the condemnation of everything which has in itself finality. Oh, the lives which might have climbed so high and seen so far and done so much which are now "stunted by preoccupation with finite aim"! What would we do were it not for this day, which bids us go up higher? What, were it not for religion, which refuses to let the soul, like a blind Samson, grind to the Philistines of money making and pleasure taking?

4. Lastly, these unfulfilled prophecies, never to be accomplished here, with this as a divine purpose in their heart of hearts, do all point to a fulfillment hereafter.

I scarcely dare enjoy all the wealth of material beauty with which this world is so full—its mountains and its oceans, its dawn and dusk, its splendor of stars, its glory of forests, unless I believe this:

"Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." But holding fast by this, to me the song of all creation pours itself into this mighty confidence, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." The redeemed life is fuller to me of prophecy than it is of fulfillment. "When he shall appear we shall be like him." That sight shall make our heaven. "We shall be satisfied when we awake in his likeness."

Ah, but better far, Christ himself shall yet be satisfied! Nothing short of that shall do justice to the promise of creation, the cost of redemption, the aspiration of our own spiritual life. He shall come, but the brow shall wear no crown of thorns, the hands be pierced no longer by the nails. He shall come, but not to a world that offers him only a manger for a cradle, only a cross for a deathbed. He shall come, but not to cold incredulity, to chill indifference, to cruel rejection. He shall come to usher in a new creation, to flash the light eternal upon this earthly life of his, to gather up the mighty purposes throbbing in his gospel as it works the world over. "He shall come, to be glorified in his saints and to be admired in all them that believe in that day." "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

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Pattison, Thomas Harwood, 1836-1904.
The south wind : and other sermons / by T. Harwood Pattison. -- Philadelphia : American Baptist Publication Society, 1905.
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